

## **Can I lay back into the dark? by NikkiHh**

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**Summary:** Moving to Hawkins, Indiana for her Father's new job wasn't how Allison Edwards imagined her Senior year. Allison and her younger brother, Daniel's lives are turned upside down by a world that was far closer than they could have ever imagined. Lucky they have back-up in the form of a guy with a love of Farrah Fawcett hairspray and a bunch of middle-schoolers. Set during season 2.

# 1. Welcome to Hawkins

Hi! I wrote this story for myself because there really isn't enough Steve stories around and that's a damn shame. I did so much research on 80's culture and slang to make this story as accurate as possible, I have used the phrase 'gag me with a spoon' so many times in daily life now I'm beginning to believe I may have been born in the wrong generation.

This story starts at the beginning of season 2 and does move a little slowly in order to integrate my OC's into the story. I actually have a bigger story planned than this and see this as kind of a prologue to that.

I really hope you enjoy this story, I wasn't going to publish it but decided if I was missing Stranger Things maybe others were too. Please let me know what you think! I would love some feedback.

I don't own Stranger things or any of it's characters, if I owned Steve he'd be a happy little bean...

*Do you wanna be a hero?*

*Can I lay in your arms?*

*Will you tell me it's alright, even though I know it's not.*

*Can I lay back into the dark?*

*Hero - George Maple*

Allison Edwards had never left Wakeford, Massachusetts before her family moved to Hawkins, Indiana.

She knew how small towns worked, where she had come from was small, even by Hawkins standard; they bragged of a population of only 10,000. Wakeford was known as one of the safest towns in America. Nothing ever happened there and if it did it was the talk of the town for a century afterwards.

Allison could never forget the story of the teenager who ran away and joined the circus, it was more than 60 years ago, and people still spoke like it happened only yesterday. That was the kind of place her

hometown was, quaint, gossipy, homey. Allison had lived in Wakeford for 17 years and in all that time they had only ever seen 2 new families with children settle in the town.

New students were like the latest toy; some people treated them like gold and others, Allison was ashamed to admit, like herself were vindictive and mean. She had grown up though, in fact, her best friend was one of the girls who had moved to Wakeford sophomore year. They had started off with Allison making her life a living Hell and had somehow grown to think of each other as sisters, they had both cried on the day Allison left.

She hoped that Hawkins wouldn't treat her and her younger brother, Daniel like toys or science experiments. Allison was a senior and she didn't really care if she didn't make friends, she already had friends and they had planned to go to college in Boston, she could survive a year without them. Allison wanted to be a journalist, isolation and different situations-built character; or so she told herself.

Daniel, on the other hand, was only 14, Hawkins was his home now and trying to fit in and make friends made him nervous. Allison had seen his face light up when he discovered that his middle school had an AV club and hoped that maybe he would be alright, he was tough and smart after all. Wakeford didn't have AV clubs or after-school activities for people who didn't like sport. They had a football team and a cheer squad, that was it. Not great opportunities for a kid who was a tech genius and a future reporter.

Allison admitted she was a little jealous of Daniel getting this clean slate, she would have loved the chance to be involved in student government, or the school newspaper, or even a track team but she was a little late to the party. She chose to find solace in the fact the whichever College she chose in Boston, she would be able to drown herself in extra-curricular activities.

Starting school late hadn't been ideal, but the teens had been grateful to have the weekend to prepare before starting school Monday, it was already the end of October meaning school was well and truly underway and Halloween only a few days away, both hated to be starting the school year late, it made Allison nervous that people would pay more attention to her; Daniel on the other hand just hoped

all the clubs he wanted to join would accept him.

Richard and Mary Edwards were their parents, they had been married for 20 years and behaved much like a typical family would. Mary was an elementary school teacher who had given up her career to raise her family, Hawkins was a new opportunity for the mother to teach again. Richard was a scientist and the driving force behind the move. He had been offered a position at Hawkins Laboratories, an offer too good to refuse, he had informed them.

It was his dream to work in the Lab and would mean he could be home with his family more. His previous job had been over an hour away from Wakeford, so Allison and Daniel rarely saw him. They had asked their mother why he always had to leave once, and she had explained that he was a very special scientist who helped the government to keep us safe.

Hawkins Lab had taken care of all the expenses, they paid for the move and the new house on the corner of Dearborn and Maple Street, a short drive to the Labs for their father and a few minutes by bike to school for Allison and Daniel when Allison didn't want to drive. The house was modern with brick and dark wood, it contained 3 levels including a basement and 4 bedrooms.

Their Mother was incredibly pleased with the choice, especially when she saw a group of 4 boys bike past and turn onto Maple, they were all around Daniel's age and one of them, a boy with uncontrollable curly brown hair had waved at Daniel as they biked past. She had beamed as her son hesitantly waved back and grabbed his face smothering him with kisses and exclaiming about best friends.

## 2. Saturday

The first few chapters are going to be focused on Allison and Daniel, you won't see much of our Stranger Things faves yet!

See opening for disclaimer.

*But you throw me into the deep end  
Expect me to know how to swim*

*Welcome to the jungle  
Are you gonna dance with me*

*Jungle - Tash Sultana*

### Saturday

The Saturday before they started school had seen Allison up early to finish unpacking her room. She wanted to explore Hawkins before school and decided to take Daniel with her. "Good Morning, Alli. How did you sleep?" Her mother said cheerily, placing eggs and toast in front of her with a kiss on her temple.

"Alright. Where's Dad?"

Allison replied adding some pepper to the eggs before digging in. "He's at the Lab, they wanted to get him prepared for Monday I suppose." Her mother replied with a shrug, setting the second plate down and pouring 2 glasses of orange juice. "Daniel, Breakfast!" She called before setting herself down with a plate.

A few seconds later they could both hear the thump of feet on the stairs and Daniel emerged wearing dark jeans and a yellow shirt, a maroon hoodie thrown over. "Mornin'" He mumbled sliding into his seat at the mahogany table.

"Hey, so I was thinking maybe Daniel and I could get out and see the town today? maybe find a movie theatre, *The Terminator* just opened."

Daniel perked up turning towards his mother with pleading eyes.

"Can we go, please? Arnold Schwarzenegger is so cool! I heard it has robots in it!" Allison thought it sounded bearable and she knew Daniel would love it.

"Did you want to drive?"

Allison shook her head, taking their bikes would give them a more authentic look at Hawkins she thought and an opportunity to talk to Daniel properly, they hadn't really talked much since they found out about the move just two short weeks ago. "Alright well just be home before dinner, take some money from my purse on the way out." Daniel grinned and started pushing as much food into his mouth as he could, Mary forced to berate him for eating like an animal, Allison laughed and left the table with a thank you, heading back to her room to change and brush her hair.

She decided on some comfortable acid wash jeans and a pink and black striped sweater, her feet covered in a beat-up pair of Chuck Taylors and her long dusty brown hair falling down her back in natural waves. Allison had never been one to worry much about her hair, she preferred practical rather than fashionable, the hairspray and gravity-defying curls of today's trends took away from the extra 15 minutes of sleep she got in the morning. Besides, she had given up trying to impress people a long time ago.

A quick look in the mirror and she deemed herself appropriate. Her eyes glanced at her face with a slight frown, long black lashes surrounded her clear blue eyes, so she rarely wore make-up. Her heart-shaped face was complimented by full chocolate coloured brows, a slight nose dusted with a few light freckles, and full pink mouth. Her best friend Nicole liked to compare her to Brooke Shields, Allison's mother had made comments to the likeness many times as well, Allison used to preen at the comparison but had forced herself not to believe it anymore, the old Allison had liked the uncanny resemblance.

Grabbing her backpack that sat by her door on the way out, Allison met Daniel and the foot of the stairs. With a ruffle of his unkempt sandy hair, she took some money from their mother's purse and opened the front door.

"Let's kick it, shit-head."

The movie had been unexpectedly cool, Daniel had loved it and had spoken of nothing else as they walked around the town centre looking for a diner to get some lunch.

"He just looked so awesome! The jacket and the glasses and holy crap did you see how cool the robots were!"

"I did, it's almost like we were watching the same movie."

"Alli, didn't Mom tell you sarcasm is an unoriginal teenage defence mechanism?"

"Dan, didn't Mom tell you to stop being a little shit?"

Allison laughed as she opened the door to a small but charmingly pink diner, it was busy, with most of the tables full, it appeared Allison and Daniel had found the popular spot for the weekend. Teens milled about talking and sipping milkshakes. Allison's tinkling laugh drew people's attention to her, but the teen was too deep in conversation to notice.

"Sit anywhere you like, sweets." A kind older lady spoke from behind the register. Allison smiled and directed Daniel to a booth near a group of kids all talking loudly over milkshakes.

"It was pretty cool," Allison admitted sliding in and grabbing a menu.

"Pretty cool? Alli, *The Terminator* has to be the best movie of the year!"

Allison laughed at the look of disbelief on her brother's face, "I thought you said *Ghostbusters* was the best movie of the year?" Daniel stuck his tongue out and perused the milkshakes on offer. "*Gremlins* was better." Allison retorted her eyes never lifting from the menu.

"Alli, sometimes I wonder what went wrong with you."

"Because I think *Gremlins* was better than *Ghostbusters* there has to be something wrong with me!"

"1, There are so many things flawed about you Alli. 2, *Ghostbusters* and *Terminator* will go down as 2 of the best movies in history, if not for the fact that they are original and not derivative then because they have visually revolutionised cinema. There is nothing innovative or revolutionary about *Gremlins* Alli, they are little monsters you shouldn't feed after midnight."

What a little smart-ass.

Allison glanced up from her menu, a superior expression on Daniel's face. The waitress had strolled over, overhearing the tail end of the conversation, and was staring at Daniel as if he had sprouted another head. Allison calmly ordered a vanilla shake and a burger, ordering a chocolate shake and chicken nuggets for Daniel. The waitress strolled away with a shake of her head, muttering something about youths today and they both burst into fits of laughter. "Maybe leave your intense cinematic reviews for home, we don't want to be driven out of town before we even start school." Allison chuckled, matching her brother's wide smile.

"It could be worse, I could have been singing the praises of *Flash dance*."

Allison's mouth popped open in mock indignation before she launched into a long-winded explanation of why Alex and Nick were the best on-screen couple ever.

Both teens were well into their meals when the table behind Allison began arguing loudly. Two of the four young boys, all around Daniel's age shouted at each other about putting the party in jeopardy and *Dungeons and Dragons*.

It had drawn Daniel's attention and he watched on in amusement as a boy with a camo bandana tied around his forehead and a boy in a red, white, and blue cap with masses of brunet curls yelled over each other. The other boys; one with floppy black hair and freckles, and the other with a chocolate bowl cut, smirked at each other with a roll of their eyes. Daniel recognised them as the boys who had biked by the house yesterday, the boy with the curly hair had waved at him.

Allison stared outside at the cool October day temporarily blocking



the rowdy boys out. There were plenty of people outside enjoying what would be the last few days of fair weather, their father had said winter in Indiana could be even more brutal than winter in Massachusetts.

Allison liked that you could see the woods surrounding everything like they were hidden amongst nature. Her Father had mentioned a path up a mountain that looked over a lake, He had visited on his last business trip here and told her she would love it. Allison was excited to spend a day out exploring what the Hawkins wilderness had to offer.

Her attention drew back to the table when she heard the boys behind her mention something about finding change for the arcade and couldn't help butting in.

"Excuse me, sorry boys."

The boys all turned to look at her, four curious eyes finding an older girl, body twisted in the booth, so her arms could lean over the top. She smiled making eye contact with the curly haired boy, he smiled back, large dimples poking out from his young cheeks.

"Did I hear you say there was an arcade in town?"

"Yeah! It's pretty new so it's always full but it's so awesome! Keith sucks but I have the top score on *Dig Dug* and *Centipede*!"

The boy with the bandana, Lucas nudges the curly haired boy smugly, "Yeah, Dustin, but don't forget who owns Princess Daphne's heart."

He waggles his brows and Dustin turns to him with a scoff, "*Dragon's Lair* is overpriced crap and the only reason I haven't beaten you is that every time I get close you sabotage me!"

"Do not!"

"Do too!"

They start to argue much to Allison's amusement before it is cut short by the smallest of the four, the boy with the brunet bowl-cut shouting

"stop!" He laughs, and the boy with the black hair smirks slightly, shaking his head.

"I've always wanted to play *Dragon's Lair*"

Allison turns at her brother shy voice, he had been silent during the brief conversation but had decided in the short time he liked the four boys in front of him, they seemed like a strong party. Daniel had to leave his party and wished that maybe these boys would like him enough to add him into theirs, he knew what a big deal that was though, so he tried not to get his hopes up.

"I know! and didn't you have the highest score in *Dig Dug* at the cinema in Wakeford?" Daniel nods, hesitantly in confirmation, playing with the straw in his shake.

"Cool, what was the score?" Dustin asks his eyes wide and excited.

"69,400."

All 4 boys look at him with bug eyes before freaking out, "That's amazing! I only have 65,000! How'd you do it? I'm Dustin that's Lucas, Will, and Mike." Daniel smiles and introduces himself before he launches into a recount Allison had heard a dozen times, but she watches as her brothers face lights up with laughter at something Lucas had said, and she feels her heart relax. Daniel would be fine in Hawkins.

"We're going to the Arcade if you want to come? We meet there at 7, it's just down the road from here." Will offered, quietly. "We just have to go home and haul for money." Dustin grins excitedly.

"Cool, I can show you my tricks for *Dig Dug*!"

The four boys depart not long after that and Daniel and Allison wave as they bike past the window with a smile. Allison turns to her brother with a grin. "Two minutes in Hawkins and you already have friends!" Daniel returns the grin and rises from his side of the booth, excited to get home and open his piggy bank.

"What can I say, I'm a charismatic child, Allison."

Allison laughs, leaving a few bills on the table and heading for the door, Daniel in tow.

"You're something, kid."

"Well, what are they like?"

"Who?"

"The children, Allison! The children my son is hanging out with right now, at eight o'clock may I add! I swear if this sort of debauchery is what I can expect from Daniel in this town, I can promise I'll have him off to boarding school before he can blink!"

Allison rolled her eyes, she sat at the table in the kitchen while her mother cleaned up. Her hair tied up in a sloppy pony, she rested her head on her hand and held a book in the other. She was currently sixty pages deep in a Vonnegut and was doing her best to block out her Mother's nonsense. Allison knew Mary had turned around from the sink to deliver her little spiel and was waiting for the appropriate response from her eldest child. Allison turned a page in her book.

"Allison!"

"Mom!" Allison replied, imitating her Mother's frustrated tone.

"I swear sometimes I wonder what I did to deserve such rotten children." Mary sniffs, turning back to the sink and banging cutlery into the drying rack. Allison refuses to lift her eyes from her book but feels her lips quirk and her eyebrow raise.

"What have my 'rotten children' done now?"

Allison lifts her head with a grin, turning in her chair to greet her Dad, who drops a kiss on her hair. "Daniel made friends and it triggered Mom's angina." Richard rests a hand on his daughter's shoulder and grins at his wife, a frown hiding the mirth on her face. Mary removes the pink rubber gloves covering her hands and pushes her thick sandy hair over her shoulder. "You are all so cruel to me."

"You are the backbone of this family."

"What have I said about sarcasm, Allison?"

Richard walks over to his wife and kisses her cheek, "You are the most beautiful backbone I've ever seen." Mary swats her husband's chest before leaning her head against it. Allison watches her parents with a smile.

Her Father had her hair, but it had begun to thin as he began the tail end of his 40's. He was a tall man, especially next to her Mother who was only 5'3. Allison liked seeing that her parents were still just as in love as they had been so many years ago. So many of her friend's parent's in Wakeford didn't love each other anymore, never splitting for fear of gossip.

Allison sat with her Dad while he ate his dinner, questions about his new position at Hawkins Lab keeping the conversation flowing. He seemed excited to be there and any animosity she still carried about the move evaporated, sometimes you had to make sacrifices for the people you love. "I'm going in again tomorrow just to finish up some paperwork I couldn't do today, but I'll be home before lunch, how about we go on a walk and I show you that path overlooking the lake I was telling you about?" Richard offers as he places his knife and fork down.

"That would be awesome, I was thinking about it today actually," Allison replies before rising from the table. "I'm gonna go for a run, is that okay?" Richard nods, taking his plate to the sink and cleaning it.

"Don't go too far."

Allison changed quickly and grabbed her Walkman before heading out the door. *Thriller* blasted from her headphones as she jogged past the quiet houses illuminated by street lamps and outdoor lights. Red or Blue signs littered yards, Allison was glad she wasn't old enough to vote for this one, she wasn't a big fan of rich people with too much power. Besides, neither of them could stop the Russians coming if they wanted to.

Allison decided to circle Maple before going home. She had only been out half an hour, but she knew her Mother would start to worry. She was focused on the footpath and glanced up just in time to skid to a

stop. A girl about her age, with shoulder length brunette hair, stood on the footpath, tapping her foot in annoyance. Her back was turned to Allison, her gaze on the exit of the cul-de-sac. Allison pulled her headphones down to rest around her neck, the catchy tune of *Billie Jean* barely decipherable.

"Excuse me, you shouldn't stand on the footpath, I nearly hit you."

The girl jumped in surprise, turning toward Allison with wide eyes, she rests a hand over her mouth before dropping it with a deep sigh. "Sorry, I didn't hear you coming, I was waiting for my brother, he's meant to be home by now. Boys, and arcades." She runs her hand through her short hair with an exasperated smile.

"Oh, my brothers at the arcade tonight as well! Maybe they're together." Allison grins, tucking a stray piece of hair behind her ear. The girl nods telling Allison her brother's name is Mike, she tells the girl her brother is with Daniel and they chuckle.

"What a strange coincidence."

"I'm Allison, by the way, Allison Edwards. We moved here yesterday."

"Oh, I'm Nancy Wheeler, Welcome to Hawkins. Are you going to the High School?"

Allison nodded in confirmation. "Cool, I can show you around Monday, if you want?" Nancy offers.

Allison smiles thankfully, "I would love that, thanks, I was a little nervous about starting the school year late especially as a senior, it'll be nice to know someone on my first day." Nancy returns her smile and steps onto the grass, so Allison can continue.

"How about I find you at lunch and I can give you a grand tour? I'm a junior but my boyfriend, Steve is a senior so I'm sure he can fill you in on anything I don't know." Nancy appears to twitch slightly when she says 'boyfriend.' Allison shrugs it off as a reaction to the dip in temperature.

"It's a date. I'll see you Monday, have a good night. Good luck with your brother!"

"Bye, Allison." Nancy laughs.

Allison replaces her head-phones and jogs away with a wave to her new school-mate. She is a few meters from her house when she sees Daniel and Mike slowly biking towards her, both giggling to themselves. "Hey, kiddos! How was the arcade?" Allison asks slowing to a walk and stopping before them, her hands resting on her hips.

"Hey Alli, it was so cool! You have to come and see all the games they have!" Daniel spouts excitedly as he swings a leg off his bike.

"Hey, Mike, your sister is outside your house waiting for you. She didn't look impressed with ya, bud." Allison chuckles at the boy as his head drops back and he stares at the stars in exasperation.

"I told her I'd pay her back, she's so dramatic." He mumbles kicking off and moving away slowly. "See you Monday, Daniel!" He shouts over his shoulder. The Edwards children wave with a laugh and make their way up the driveway together.

"So, how was it?"

"How was what?"

"Don't play dumb with me Daniel Edwards! How was the arcade?"

"It was fine, Mom! Jeez."

Their Mom turns to Allison, pointing an accusatory finger. "This is your doing, your teenager-y behaviour is rubbing off on him." Daniel and Allison share a look before laughing at Mary. "That would be puberty, Mother." Allison chuckles. Mary cracks a smile before sending each of her children off with a kiss. "Stop growing up." She mumbles to them both before walking off to her room with a shake of her head.

Allison and Daniel race each other upstairs, Daniel loses only because of a perfectly timed hip bump that leaves him sprawled on the second last step. Giggling, the older teen walks into her room and collapses on her bed, Daniel joining her a few seconds later.

"Cheaters never prosper." He mumbles grudgingly.

"Neither do whiners," Allison replies, earning a jab in the ribs. They chat for a while about Daniel's new friends before Allison sends him to bed when she realises it's nearly ten-thirty. He likes all four of them, even Mike who Daniel said was closed off at first but warmed up to him eventually.

Lucas told him that they had lost a party member, her name was El and she was their mage. It had happened almost a year ago and Mike had been closest to her. Daniel had backed off Mike after that and he had begun seeking him out as the night continued. Dustin and Lucas argued a lot and Will was even quieter than Daniel was, but they had all been welcoming and in awe of the blond boy, especially when he defeated the dragon from *Dragon's Lair* on his second try.

Allison bids her brother good night with a smile and changes into her pyjamas with bleary eyes. She remembered that she was running with her Father tomorrow and her last thought before she fell asleep was that she was glad she didn't push herself on her run tonight.

### 3. Sunday

#### Disclaimer in opening.

*I hurl into the moment like I'm standing at the edge (I know)*

*Falling - Haim*

#### Sunday

Allison's whole morning had been spent in her room, she woke up late and had lounged around until lunchtime, knowing her father would be home soon. The second he got home and changed, she was herding him out the door with a sandwich in his hand, much to his amusement. Allison had gotten her love of running from her Dad, it had always been something they had done together when he was home. It was the only time she really got to talk with her Father and she had always treasured the time together.

The track was steep, so they decided on a light jog to start, Richard had said the view of the lake was only fifteen minutes away, but it was everything he promised.

"How're you feeling about tomorrow?"

Allison turned her head to her Father, her breath puffing from her mouth in white clouds, they had been jogging for a few minutes and the incline was already starting to affect her. Allison thought about it for a moment before responding that she was hopeful for a good ending to her high school years. "I met a girl on my run last night, she's the sister of one of Daniel's new friends, Mike. She offered to show me around."

Her Father hummed in approval before turning to his daughter again, "I'm sorry that I made you move away from all your friends, especially in your senior year. Hawkins is a wonderful town and I honestly think it's going to have just as many opportunities for you as it will for Daniel."

"I know, Dad," Allison replied. "I'm happy as long as you and Mom



and Daniel are happy."

"Now why can't you say those sorts of things in front of your Mother, she thinks she's raised a demon from Hell."

Allison laughs out loud, nudging her Father's arm with her shoulder. "Whatever, loser." She retorts speeding off ahead of Richard with a grin.

"Ah, there she is! The demon spawns!" He hollers in reply, speeding up after her.

Allison touches the wooden fence of the lookout and turns, seeing her Father a few hundred meters away still. Turning back to the view she sighs in delight, it was definitely worth it. A light mist sat on the grey water, it was a long drop, not the sort you would live to tell about. Greystone surrounded half of the lake and the dense green forest of Hawkins surrounded the other, Allison imagined it would be a lovely spot to relax come summer time.

"Worth it?"

"Worth it."

They had stood side by side enjoying the silence of the cool day and the company of the other for a while before Richard suggested heading back. Allison looked over once more and made a promise to herself to return as many times as possible before she left Hawkins. They walked this time and it had been several content minutes before Richard broke the silence. "So, I have to talk to you about something before we get back home." Allison looks over at her Father, his dark brows are furrowed, he stares at his feet for several moments before matching blue eyes meet.

"I've been given a project from the Lab, it's a really big deal and I start on Monday. It's the reason I've had to go to the office this weekend. I just wanted to tell you and your brother as well that you aren't really going to see me for a few weeks or at least till the project is complete but once this is done, I won't be taking assignments like this anymore. After this, I'll be doing more work from home." Allison stares ahead wondering why her Father was telling her, she knew he

had promised that they would see him more now they were in Hawkins, but he had never told them anything before.

"Is it important?"

"Incredibly. It's a great honour that I've been chosen to lead the project."

Allison nods in thought before turning to her Father with a smile. "Well, I guess you'll have to hurry up and finish it, so we can go on more adventures." Richard smiles at his daughter, wrapping an arm around her and squeezing tightly. "I look forward too many more chances to lose to my little cheat." Allison laughs at his words and hugs him back. Richard pushes her away lightly and takes off, leaving a surprised Allison in the dust.

"Who're you calling 'cheat!' wonder where I learned this terrible behaviour!"

"Blame your Mother!"

Allison sprints after her Father, she catches him quickly, much to his chagrin and is leaning back on the hood of his car by the time he jogs up. "All good, old man?" She asks with a cheeky grin.

"I've taught you too well." He mutters bracing his hands on his knees and regulating his breathing.

"Cheaters never prosper is all, Dad. I can't believe no one ever taught you that." Allison smirks jumping off the hood.

"Get in the car, smart-ass."

## 4. Monday

### Disclaimer in opening

*It's not the lacking of spine, nor of physical pulse*

It's just a feeling of distance akin to a feeling of loss

*The deepest sighs, the frankest shadows - Gang of youths*

### Monday

When Allison woke up on Monday morning to her mother's shouts, she felt a pit in her stomach that made her feel ill. She and her Father had gotten home had dinner and gone straight to bed yesterday. All the nervousness she should have felt last night was swirling around inside, making her doubt if this move had been a good idea.

What were people going to say? She had pretended that a new school wasn't going to bother her, mostly to save face in front of Daniel and in hopes her pretend confidence would turn into real confidence if she kept lying to herself, but she couldn't deny it now she was terrified.

Allison got up and brushed her hair and teeth, leaving her long hair wavily cascading down past her either side of her chest. Allison put on her favourite acid-wash jeans and tucked a white button-down shirt into them, completing the look with a lilac coloured sweater. Her Chucks on her feet, she clutched her new school books and opened her door with a deep breath. It was seven months, friends, or no friends; she could do this.

Daniel left his room at the same time and Allison smiled reassuringly, quickly realising Daniel didn't need it when she saw an excited grin on his face. "I take it I don't need to worry about you today?"

"I'm good. Do I need to worry about you?"

"I'm the oldest, you never have to worry about me."

"You're my sister and this is your senior year. Do I need to worry about you?"

Allison shook her head, ruffling her brother's hair with a smile. "Thanks for worrying, shit-head." Daniel rolls his eyes before fixing his mussed hair.

"You know we were having a really important sibling moment until you called me a shit-head, shit-head." Allison chuckles and heads towards the stairs, adjusting her backpack and she heads down to the kitchen.

"Whatever shit-head."

Daniel snorted, following his sister down and sliding into his seat at the table. "Oh, I forgot to tell you on Saturday night! Dustin nearly beat *Dragon's Lair*!"

"Really! What happened?"

"He was so close Alli, but Lucas totally distracted him on purpose, so he could be the only one to claim Princess Daphne, which didn't work anyway because I won the game like half an hour later." Their Mother enters the dining room with a smile, placing a bowl of cereal in front of them both before returning with her own. They both bid her good morning before Daniel launches back into his story.

"And then the guy who works at the arcade, Keith, he told Dustin that he should check the games he has a top score in and someone had beat them! His name is MADMAX which I think is pretty cool, but Dustin thinks it's bullshit." Daniel spoke, without taking a breath, his pale cheeks gradually turning red with excitement and lack of oxygen. Allison laughed while Mary dropped her spoon into her bowl with a clatter.

"Daniel Richard Edwards! Language!"

"That's just what he said, Mom!" Daniel exclaimed. Allison turned her head away, so her Mother wouldn't see her snickering, but Daniel gave her away.

Mary swatted her arm before turning toward her son with a finger raised. "I don't care, son. If that's the sort of language the boys here use, I'll pull you out of school and teach you myself, completely

unacceptable." Allison was laughing so hard at Daniel's sour expression tears had started to form in her eyes. "Now you!" She pointed her finger towards Allison who was wiping her eyes. "Stop encouraging him. And you." Mary turns her finger back to Daniel. "Eat, you can't be late for your first day." They ate in silence sharing amused glances every few minutes until Mary cleared the bowls and Daniel pounced on his chance to finish the story.

They were gathering their bags from the front door when Daniel got to the best part of the story. "Then Mike was like 'I'm not prostituting my sister!'"

Allison and Daniel both leave the house in a rush after that, giggling while Mary yells "Daniel!" from the doorway, tea-towel in hand.

A carpark sat between Hawkins middle and Hawkins high, it was full of teens her age, leaning on cars and talking or sitting cross-legged on the hood rushing to finish homework from the weekend. Hawkins easily held triple the students her old school held, and a glance Daniel's way saw them realising this wasn't the small-town vibe they knew.

"Seven months, you can do this Alli."

Allison turned back to Daniel with a smile and a nod. "I'm going to be fine, kid. We're both going to be fine." Daniel pointed out Will, standing several cars down beside an older boy with a similar haircut. Daniel and Allison grabbed their bags and exited the car, Daniel with excitement, Allison with trepidation. Will waved at Daniel as they approached, and the younger boys instantly launched into conversation.

"I'm Jonathan, Will's older brother. You must be Allison; the boys haven't stopped talking about the new family in town."

Allison's gaze meets the hesitant eyes of Jonathan and she smiles with false confidence. "Hawkins doesn't seem like the sort of town to see many fresh faces."

Jonathan agrees with a nod, pushing his fringe over to one side. "Yeah, Hawkins is a quiet town, nothing really happens here,"

Jonathan replies averting his gaze and rubbing his arm uncomfortably.

"I'll make sure Daniel gets to class if you like, Allison?" Will speaks softly, a wide grin on his face as the two boys begin to back away from the older children.

"Oh, okay! Have a good day!" She replies, her grip tightens on her books at the fake cheer in her voice. Daniel picked up on it automatically and offered his ring finger for their secret hand-shake. They pull at the same time and they both stumble, the tension leaving Allison's shoulders.

"Bye, Alli!"

"Bye, shit-head." Daniel waves, already walking away with Will. He waves dismissively at Jonathan who tells him not to be late after school. Allison sees Lucas approach the two boys and they all talk animatedly, Daniel laughing loudly at something Will said.

"They're good kids, your brother will be fine."

Allison glances at Jonathan with a grin before facing the high school with a sigh.

"Daniel's a smart kid, it's me I'm a little more worried about currently," Allison says with a laugh. She could feel people's eyes on her, and a quick glance confirmed her feeling. Allison felt a hot flush course through her body, her skin growing clammy; perhaps the lilac sweater had been a poor choice. Jonathan shifted beside her unsure of how to comfort the girl, he placed a hand on her arm lightly and tried to give her a reassuring smile.

"Trust me, the scariest person in there is Carol and the worst she can do it pop her gum." Allison laughs and Jonathan ushers her along with an offer to take her to the office.

They talked about themselves as they went, Allison learned Jonathan liked photography, which leads to a conversation about the lake she had seen yesterday. "My Dad and I ran to the lookout yesterday, I wish I had some semblance of talent with a camera, Hawkins seems

like a wonderful place to get lost in." Jonathan cleared his throat and nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, It's a special place." Allison senses an uncomfortable silence but doesn't get the chance to question it before Jonathan is speaking again. "Are you going to try out for the track team? I'm sure the coach would accept you if you told him you were interested."

Allison shrugged, it wasn't something she had thought about. Wakeford hadn't had a track team; her running had always been recreational. "I don't know if it's worth it, I've got less than a year left and then I'm off to college."

"I'm told athletics looks great on a college application."

"You're told?"

Allison smirks at Jonathan who shrugs with a small smile. "It's what my Mom says anyway, she wants me to try out for something team orientated in hopes of showing I can work in groups." They reach the office and find Nancy standing beside the door, her bag strapped across her cream sweater. She's adjusting the pink turtle-neck visible underneath her sweater when she spots them, and a bright smile crosses her pretty face.

"Hey, I was hoping to run into you before lunch! I see you've met Jonathan." Her gaze lands on Jonathan and she asks about his weekend.

"Umm, yeah it was fine. Sorry, I didn't call, I was helping Mom most of the weekend. You?"

Nancy glances down the hall, students milled about the eggshell halls, lined with blue lockers, her eyes falling on a tall boy in a blue jacket with a perfectly coiffed mane of brown hair, he turned to look back at Nancy with a grin and Allison noticed a pair of ray-bans covering his eyes. Nancy smiles back before returning her eyes to Jonathan, "That's okay, I assumed. It was good, Mike stole all my money again but, yeah it was nice, quiet actually."

Jonathan's hands slip into his pockets with a nod, Allison thinks he

has a strange habit of being awkward at inconvenient times. "Are you ready for your first day? I wish Jonathan and I could be with you all day, were both juniors. We can have lunch together though! And I'll still show you around." Allison smiles at Nancy's excitement, thankful to have the girl on her side.

"I would love to, and that tour will be so helpful, Hawkins High is so much bigger than the school I'm used to." They agree for Allison to stay beside her locker after class and Nancy will find her for lunch. The two younger students have their first class together and go to leave together before Allison's voice stops them. "Thanks for walking me here, it was really cool."

Jonathan waves, a slight blush colouring his pale cheeks. He shrugs his denim covered shoulders and heads down the hall with a smiling Nancy.

Allison's first class was Chemistry and when she walked into the class just as the bell rang, the teacher directed her toward an empty seat two rows from the back, sitting in the seat next to hers was the tall boy Nancy had been watching in the hallway. He nodded at her as she sat down before turning away.

Allison could tell he wasn't really paying attention to what was going on around him, his pencil was tapping out the beat to an unknown song, his head leaned on his other hand and he stared outside, his dark eyes focused on the dense woods that edged the school. Allison got the vibe he wasn't a Chemistry fan. His hair was a being unto itself, the do reminds her of Tom Cruise from *Risky Business*, the glasses he had been wearing before certainly added to that aura. He dressed well in a blue, members only jacket that had the sleeves pushed up his forearms, a polo, and a fitted pair of jeans, similar in colour to Allison's.

The boy obviously took the time to make sure he looked good. Allison decided she thought he was handsome, she certainly wasn't blind, but she couldn't see herself falling for a boy who dressed better than she did. Allison had always thought 'peacocking' should be left to the birds.

"We have a new student with us today, please make her welcome. We



are big fans of partner work in Chemistry, so I've paired you with Mr Harrington, perhaps you can help him with his attention span."

The Teacher, a short man in his mid to late 40's smacks a meter ruler against the chalkboard causing the boy next to her to jump. The teacher; Mr Samuels, her schedule had said, adjusted his brown and mustard argyle sweater, and turned to the board beginning his class. Papers rustled around her, and she followed suit. Taking the cap off her pen, Allison glances at the teen beside her; Harrington. His head down and a hand in his hair as he copies notes.

"Hey, I'm Allison, Allison Edwards."

If this guy was going to be Allison's partner she wanted to start off on the right foot and she hoped he had some notes to steal, his earlier behaviour betrayed that he wasn't the most attentive student but hopefully he cared enough to get the basics. "Steve Harrington." He replies, his voice slightly bored.

"So, we're going to be partners, I was wondering if I could borrow your notes, so I'm caught up?" He nods and scratches his head, his cheeks brightening slightly, much to Allison's surprise.

"Yeah, I'll lend 'em to you. If you can read them go for broke."

Allison's smile turns genuine at Steve's embarrassment and she shrugs. "Don't worry about it, Harrington, My dad's a scientist with handwriting so bad it's practically in another language. I think I can handle it." He huffs a laugh and turns to the board, copying down the day's lesson.

The class passed by quickly after that. Allison was glad to realise she didn't have much catching up to do. She was pretty good at Chemistry and didn't mind partner work, so she thought it would be an easy pass. She was glad to have Steve's notes to fill in any blanks. He did have atrocious handwriting, but she consoled him with a promise that she had seen worse, it was a lie, but it seemed to sate him.

As she walked out the class a girl with orange hair and a blue bomber jacket passed her an orange flier with a smile, "Hey new girl,

welcome to Hawkins! Make sure you come and say hello."

Allison accepted the flier '*Come and get sheet-faced*' It read, and Allison couldn't help the snort of laughter. "Thanks." She smiled, sliding the orange flier into Steve's Chemistry book. In her rush to find her new locker and unburden her sore arms, Allison turned a corner a little too quickly and found herself helpless to stop a collision with a firm denim-clad figure. Her and Steve's books tumbled to the ground and she bent quickly to collect them.

"I'm so sorry, I'm lost, and I was rushing like a fool." She rushed to apologise not noticing the other person had bent down to assist her with her books. Allison let out a frustrated sigh, her notes and Steve's had become mixed up.

"It's no problem, honestly. I'm a little lost myself." A deep voice replies with a chuckle.

Allison meets the blue eyes of the boy she had run into and smiles brightly, "Are you new as well?" She asks as he hands her the papers that had spilt from her binder and stands with her. A trace of a smirk is visible on his lips and his blue eyes sparkle. He runs a hand through his curled hair, pushing a few strands back into the mullet on his head, boys in this school had insane hair.

"First day, just moved from California. I'm lucky people have been so... accommodating." He glances behind him, spotting three girls watching his every move as he adjusted his double denim outfit, pure lust written in their eyes.

Allison's eyes flicker to the girls than to the boy in front of her who wasn't hiding his love of attention. "It's my first day as well, must be strange for a place like Hawkins to get so many new kids in one day. I'm Allison by the way." He appears not to have heard her, attention still on the girls behind him and she chuckles knowingly, her past life as an 'Elite' meant she had met many a boy like this one. "I'd say new kids should stick together but it would appear you're doing just fine on your own."

She tucks a strand of hair behind her ear and readjusts the books in her arms with a wide smirk before the blonde boy returns his

attention back to her. "Billy Hargrove." Billy holds up the orange flier in his hand before handing it to Allison. "You going to 'get sheet-faced?'" He asks with a grin. Allison smiles politely and shrugs, he had obviously missed the part of the conversation where she had made a stab at his already blooming popularity. Allison side-stepped the blond and moved back into the flow of the hall.

"I don't know. I'm not sure turning up to school hungover on my first week would send the best message."

Billy nods with a single wave and smiles, "Well, if you decide to grace us with your presence, maybe we can get to know each other a little better? New kids should stick together and all that." Allison snorts with a shake of her head.

"I'll be sure to think on it, bye Billy."

"Catch you 'round, Allison."

I sure hope not.

Allison nods, despite her thoughts and turns her foot, thankfully spotting her name on a locker only a few meters away. Unloading her books, Allison couldn't believe she thought Steve Harrington was a peacock! Billy Hargrove was seriously striking, and he obviously knew it. He also seemed to like the sound of his own voice. Billy gave her a weird vibe, he had openly flirted with her but then preened over the attention of three other girls in the span of two minutes. He had an ego, and he obviously didn't have much respect for women, that Allison want to avoid him. Something else about him made her cautious, she couldn't put her finger on what yet.

Lingering before her locker she hears a feminine scream and turns to her left in a fright, spotting Nancy being held off the ground by a laughing Steve, who was wearing his sunglasses again. Jonathan stood with them for only a moment before the couple kissed, Steve pushing Nancy against her locker while she tried to remove his glasses. She pulled away from her boyfriend just in time to see Jonathan walking down the corridor and turning the corner.

Allison couldn't help but wonder about the story behind the three of

them, it seemed like an awkward friendship to say the least. Allison looked at the flier in her hand again before shoving it back into Steve's Chemistry notes and in her locker, maybe she would invite Jonathan to tag along on Wednesday if she went.

Allison knew the party was an opportunity to make some friends and he seemed like a nice guy who could also help her fend off Billy Hargrove. Allison liked the idea of them teaming up against their younger brothers and thought so far, of the few people she had met, Jonathan seemed like he had the potential to be a good friend. Besides the future journalist in her was dying to know the story of Nancy, Jonathan, and Steve and what loosens the lips quicker than a little alcohol?

Allison stood by her locker dutifully at lunch, waiting for Nancy to seek her out. She had brought her novel to school and made use of the few quiet moments, leaning against the blue paint while students milled about happily.

"Vonnegut? You and Jonathan are going to be best friends."

Allison peaks up with a smile, Nancy stands before her with her arms crossed. "Well, I'll be in good company then." Allison smiles, throwing the book into her locker.

"The best."

Nancy takes her on a quick tour before ending it in the cafeteria where they line up to get lunch.

"I met your boyfriend, Steve Harrington, right? He's my Chemistry partner." Nancy smiles at her mention of Steve, a faraway look in her eyes.

"He's a great guy."

Allison watches the girl as she thanks the cafeteria lady who serves her a salad and a slice of pizza. "You sound like you're trying to reassure yourself as well."

Nancy stares at the other girl with wide eyes before breaking into a smile when she notices the easy grin on Allison's face. "You're funny,"

Nancy says with a shake of her head. Allison follows Nancy to an empty table and conversation shifts to their little brothers.

"He breaks into my room every week, I swear. My Mom says I have to take it easier on him after everything that happened with Will last year but sometimes he just drives me mad, you know?"

Allison nods in agreement before her mind runs over her words again. "Sorry, something happened to Will last year?" Nancy averts her gaze but nods in confirmation.

"Yeah, everyone knows in town, sometimes I forget how small Hawkins is. Uh, last year Will disappeared for a week in the woods. They thought he was dead. Jonathan and his Mom, Joyce, they went through Hell."

Allison places her fork on her plate with shock. "Jesus Christ." She certainly hadn't been expecting that. It explained so much about Will's timid disposition and Jonathan's protectiveness. Allison remembered saying to Jonathan that she thought Hawkins was a great place to get lost in, she felt like a grade A asshole. "He's okay now though?"

Nancy nodded with a small smile, "He's okay, he's a tough kid; they all are."

Allison smiled at her new friend returning to her meal just as Steve sat down beside Nancy, wrapping an arm around her shoulders. "Hello, ladies." He smirks. Allison moves her gaze his brown eyes as he nods toward her "Edwards."

Allison nods back with a small smile, "Harrington."

Steve looks over Allison's shoulder his smirk dropping a touch before his eyes return Allison. "You know that guy? He's been staring at you since I sat down." Steve gestures with his chin, his hand reaching for a fry on Nancy's plate. Allison has a feeling she knows who it is, and her suspicions are confirmed when she finds the blue gaze of Billy Hargrove trained on her from across the cafeteria.

Billy's smirk widens when he sees he's been caught, waving his

fingers at her before returning his attention toward the table filled with boisterous guys. Allison turns back to her lunch, her cheeks flushed. "His names Billy, he's a new kid too," Allison says, resting her head in her hand and spearing a piece of lettuce.

"Seems Billy might have taken an interest, you should invite him to the party on Wednesday night!" Nancy exclaims, accidentally shrugging off Steve's arm in her excitement too caught up to notice the discomfort written all over her new friend.

"He's already invited me to go with him... I think." Allison replies with a confused frown, at least she thinks he invited her. The passive-aggressive 'grace us with your presence' thing had made it a little murky for her, and the flirting with other girls' part as well, she supposed. Steve picks up on Allison's discomfort quickly, gesturing toward Billy with a frown.

"Is he bothering you?"

Allison shakes her head looking up at Steve with a reassuring smile. "No, I guess I just got a strange vibe from him." She admits. "I don't know, maybe I shouldn't judge him before I give him a chance."

Steve grunts, staring at Billy, a reserved look in his dark eyes. "Sometimes you need to trust your gut, Edwards, especially in this town. If you want me to talk to him just let me know." Allison rolls her eyes at the manly display but is secretly relieved that she has someone to look out for her already, she's suddenly glad she would have friends in Hawkins.

"It's Hawkins, Indiana, not the mean streets of New York, *Officer Krupke*," Allison replies with raised brows. Nancy laughs at the reference, but it flew over her boyfriend's perfect hair. "*West Side Story*? The tale of forbidden love on the rough, dance-filled streets of New York? No?" The boy's frown deepens, glancing at the two girls who are openly laughing at his confusion.

"Okay Macho man," Allison laughs out letting him have his manly display. "I'll be sure to let you know if I need you to protect me." Steve meets her eyes and breaks into a grin when he sees the sarcastic look on her face.

"We still going to the library, Nance?" Steve turns to his girlfriend, stealing another fry.

"I totally forgot, will you be okay, Allison?" Nancy asked, concerned.

Allison waved her worry away and rose from her seat. "I'm fine, Nancy. Thank you for showing me around. I think I'm gonna track down Jonathan, that talk of Vonnegut before has me curious on his thoughts on *Slaughterhouse 5*. I'll see you both later." They both waved as she walked away, heading to the darkroom Nancy had pointed out during their tour.

Allison knocked on the door when she found the well-shrouded room, she didn't get a reply, so she quickly entered, trying not to let in any light. The room was small, almost the size of a closet and photos hung from wooden clips all around the room. Jonathan was pinning up a photo of Will and a small brunette woman Allison assumed was his Mom. They were both grinning, entwined together in a small, cluttered kitchen.

"They look so happy. It's a really lovely picture." Allison smiles at the teenager, who turns in surprise at her voice. She can see he's embarrassed and apologises for prying.

"You don't need to apologise, they have been through so much, it's good to see them smiling again. People in this town don't make it easy to move on, you know?" Allison nods in agreement, the fact that Jonathan accepted that by now Allison would have been told about Will's disappearance was telling on its own.

She came to stand beside him taking in the pictures around her. "I'm really sorry about what happened to Will, I'm glad he came home safe. I'm, uh, sorry about what I said earlier, the getting lost in the woods thing. I feel like a total asshole."

Jonathan pushes his fringe to the side with a shrug, he had been staring at his feet, but his gaze found the photo that hung above him again. "You couldn't have known, it's all good." They fall into a comfortable silence while Allison takes in the different pictures hung around the room. Most were of Will and his Mom but in the corner, she spotted a beautiful candid of Nancy staring off into the distance,

a wide smile on her face. Allison imagines they were sitting on the hood of his car talking when he took the photo, it's a close-up but she can see the forest that lines the school car park.

"Wow, she looks so beautiful."

Jonathan glances over his shoulder and his expression softens. "She looks perfect." He replies, his cheeks darkening at the honesty in his words. Allison smiles at him knowingly before returning to the photo.

"She really does." Allison smiles taking a seat in the corner and watching Jonathan hang another photo. "So, if you don't mind me asking; what happened between you two?" Jonathan turns his head slightly with a frown.

"Between who?"

"Why, you and Veronica of course! Does Betty know? When will you stop playing with these girl's hearts, Archie?" Allison replies, clutching her heart dramatically. Jonathan turns, leaning against the table with a smirk.

"Your references are outdated, Sugar"

"Oh, honey, honey." She sings with a tut. Jonathan rolls his eyes, a smile pulling at his mouth. "Seriously though, you and Nancy?" Allison prods.

"There's nothing to tell."

Allison raises an eyebrow at the teen. She decided at that moment her new friend was a terrible liar. "You don't have to tell me if you don't want to, I mean I get it, you hardly know me." The girl shrugged crossing her legs and resting her hand on her palm. "But I'm a great listener and I offer no judgment."

Jonathan crosses his arms over his chest before dropping them back with a sigh, Allison felt bad for making him uncomfortable and opened her mouth to tell him not to worry when he spoke. "Some stuff happened last year, around the time that Will disappeared, we got close. I thought we had something and I waited for her, she chose Steve." Allison watches the boy before her a sad expression crossing



his face. Sensing there was more to the story but feeling guilty for dredging it up, and letting her journalistic curiosity get the better of her; Allison swiftly changes the subject.

"So, you going to this party on Wednesday? I could be persuaded into going if I a cohort..." Jonathan raises an eyebrow at the teen who watched him with amusement. Allison noted the relief on his face at the change in subject. "Whadya say? Wanna be my awkward partner in crime?"

Jonathan chuckled with a shake of his head. "I'm really not a party person but if I didn't have to go trick-or-treating with Will and the kids I would. My Mom doesn't like Will doing things alone cause of... you know."

Allison nods in understanding. "Well, maybe you can swing by afterwards? So far you and Nancy are the only people I've met who I actually like." Jonathan grins briefly and Allison's smile grows in response, she had only seen Jonathan Byers really smile one other time today from something Will had said as she approached them with Daniel this morning; she liked that she had made her new friend smile.

"You don't like Steve? Everyone loves Steve." Jonathan's smile fell to a smirk and Allison returned it.

"Meh, I've seen better." Jonathan chuckled again at her joke, hanging another photo. "So..." Allison probes, hoping he will consider.

Jonathan watches her with amusement, crossing his arms over his chest. "What do you want to do when you leave school?"

Allison frowns, "Journalism maybe Politics, why?"

"You have the gift of persuasion, they are appropriate choices." Allison grinned at Jonathan's quiet words taking that as a maybe.

"So, I heard you're a Vonnegut fan, tell me what your thoughts on *Slaughterhouse 5*?"

When Allison and Daniel met in the carpark, the older girl wasn't surprised to find her brother surrounded by his new friends. "Hey,

Allison!" Dustin waved, noticing her before the others. They were all talking over each other, circled around a note Lucas held. When they noticed Allison, Lucas scrunched up the note, tucking it behind his back. "Hey, Alli! What's going on? How was your first day? We weren't doing anything?" Daniel rushes, his hands clasped at his front attempting to maintain a picture of innocence.

"Uh-huh, sure. It was fine, I take it you all had a good day?" She replies dubiously.

All five boys before her nod in sync and she can't help the grin that slips onto her face.

"Just an average day!" Lucas replied.

"Yep, nothing weird or creepy happening here!" Dustin says loudly, earning an elbow from Mike.

"Right..." Allison utters, her eyes falling between the five of them. Daniel takes this as his opportunity to farewell his friends and jumps in the blue station wagon with a wave. The four boys walk away with goodbyes to the teen and she joins her brother in the car, an eyebrow raised. "So, wanna tell me what that was about?"

Daniel rolls his eyes but can't contain the grin on his face. "We found out who MADMAX was." Allison starts the car and they make their way out of the parking lot. "Really? Is that what you were all whispering about?" Daniel nodded excitedly in confirmation.

"Yeah! Get this, MADMAX is a girl! Her name is Max and she's new just like me, she's like super cool and she rides a skateboard and she caught us spying on her and wrote us a note that we were stalkers." He finished in a rush. Allison laughed, shaking her head.

"Good, don't spy on girls, bud. It's weird."

Daniel huffed with a roll of his eyes, believing he and the others were completely justified in their mission. He turned the tables on his sister, hoping she would forget and leave this conversation out of the recap he was sure their Mother would demand. "How was your first day?"

Allison smiles at the boy beside her genuinely and taps the steering wheel. "It was alright, kid."

"Alright as in *Friday the 13th* or alright as in *Nightmare on Elm Street*? Both alright in their own right but for wildly different reasons." Daniel asks sagely, Allison found herself wondering again how her brother had seen those movies without her knowledge.

"Cinematic masterpiece *Psycho* alright." She teased, knowing he hadn't seen the movie. With a pout in his older sisters direction, the school was forgotten about as the younger boy launched into an obviously well thought out argument in support of a quick and secret viewing of the aforementioned movie.

## 5. Tuesday

**Hellllloo! Hope you are enjoying my little story so far! Thanks to everyone who has liked and followed, it's pretty cool to get that notification. I was planning to update every Sunday however my Mum is coming to visit me next week (yay!) so everything might be messed up for a few weeks.**

**Every chapter will have a few lines from some of my favourite songs, most are Australian but I would highly recommend them, Aussie music will change your life!**

### **Disclaimer in the opening**

*I'm still trying to find the words to pin down people to a page  
As though articulation might make them stay  
But I've never been a writer, or at least not very well  
They always told me I should show when all I want to do is tell  
The story that's the same every time: you tell me yours, I'll tell you mine*

*Emotionally untidy - Rachel Maria Cox*

### **Tuesday**

"How's it going, Edwards?"

Allison closes her car door with a wave toward Nancy and Steve. Nancy stood in front of Steve with an exasperated expression while the boy leaned against his car with a grin. She smirked at the love-birds display, grabbing her bag from the backseat. It was only their second day, but Daniel had already ditched Allison in favour of biking to school, Mike had knocked on the door half an hour before the first bell and introduced himself to their Mother. Mary had been standoffish until she saw the two kids interact and decided the boy had decided *not* to prostitute his sister; Daniel could have worse friends.

"Morning guys." Allison smiled at the two, placing Steve's Chemistry notes on top of the English book he had beside him. "Thanks for letting me borrow these, they were great."

Steve raises his eyebrows at the book. "You got caught up on a month of school work in a night?" Allison shrugged glancing between the two of them defensively. "What? It wasn't like it was hard!"

They both continue to stare at her like she's spontaneously grown a beard, Allison rolls her eyes, crossing her arms over her chest. "Steve's notes were super helpful."

Nancy burst into giggles while Steve looked on insulted. "Hey, I'll have you know I'm great at Chemistry!" Allison nods in solidarity, a smile fighting its way onto her lips. Nancy's laughter subsides, and she steps closer to her boyfriend, pecking him on the cheek.

Allison is watching the two, feeling nauseous but also a little jealous of how perfectly in love they are when an arm is thrown around her shoulders. Allison jumps in surprise and looks up to see Billy Hargrove grinning back. "Allison, come sit with us at lunch today, everyone wants to meet you." Allison turns her head to see a freckled boy and the girl with the orange hair who was giving out fliers yesterday standing behind Billy. They were both smirking at Steve who had noticed them all over Nancy's head and adopted a serious expression.

"You've certainly picked up a few admirers already, Billy," Allison says sardonically, her shoulders hunching in hope Billy would take a hint and drop his arm; he doesn't.

"I'll tell you my secrets at lunch." Billy utters in her ear, his voice dropping several octaves. If he didn't make Allison so uneasy with his demands she might have said yes. Billy Hargrove was smoking hot, she had never found herself attracted to his type before, but Allison couldn't deny his voice in her ear gave her goose-bumps. She had decided to give him a chance despite her gut instinct. His dominant display was exactly what she and her gut had expected.

"Well, it wouldn't be a secret if you told me." She replied shaking off the shivers.

"It can be our secret."

"You know, I'm just terrible at keeping secrets! It's like the second

someone tells me something I must shout it to the world. It's very obnoxious. If I were you, I would just turn tail now, save yourself and your secrets for someone less iniquitous."

Running his hand through his hair with a grin, Billy removes his arm from around Allison's shoulders. "Ah, I think you're worth the risk." He grins, and she rolls her eyes. "So, I'll see you at lunch?" He asks, his voice lowering and a more genuine smile touching his lips. It's a side to Billy she hadn't seen yet.

"I'll think about it." Allison meets his eyes with an impish smile.

"That's the second time you've said that to me, one more and I might start thinking you don't like me," Billy replies, stepping back to his new friends, a heart-breaking grin returning to his face.

"You should have started thinking that after the first time," Allison replies with an eyebrow arched, she didn't know how she felt about the game they were playing, but she knew playing would make him leave faster and despite the softer side she had just seen, she still couldn't shake her gut feeling.

Billy huffs a laugh and walks back to the school, his friends watching over their shoulders. "I'll see you at lunch, Allison." He calls before turning on his heel and strutting into school. If he looked back to see if Allison was checking him out, he would have been disappointed to find her attention on her Chemistry partner and not his ass.

"First, he stares at you at lunch and now he's inviting you, day two and you have a seat with the cool kids," Nancy notes with a curious expression. Steve was smirking at his Chemistry partner, who grimaced at Nancy's words. "Yeah, it's not really my scene." It hadn't been for a long time.

Nancy shrugged, gathering her books from the hood of the car as the bell rang. "You definitely had some chemistry with Billy. It's great! Your both new, you can bond. Besides, didn't you say you were going to give him a chance? Lunch would be the perfect opportunity" She says with a kind smile.

Allison snorts tightening the straps on her bag. "I don't think I'm

interested in the kind of bonding Billy Hargrove is interested in, I'm undecided on that chance yet, honestly he still weirds me out." Allison shrugs walking toward the school with her arms raised. "Anyway, blonds aren't really my thing, I've always preferred brunets."

In Chemistry, Steve pushes a note onto Allison's page discreetly. She glances at him, but he stays focused on his work his cheek rested on his left hand while he writes. Allison peeps at Mr Samuels finding his attention on the quickly filling chalk-board.

**I don't like this Billy guy.**

Allison blinks at the note a few times before scribbling down a quick reply.

**You don't have too.**

He shakes his head at her words and scrawls a sentence and pushes it back.

**You don't like him.**

They stare at each other defiantly when Allison reads his words. She didn't like Billy at all, but she wasn't going to let Steve Harrington dictate to her.

**Who said I didn't like him?**

Steve huffs when he reads the note and turns to her in frustration. "Yeah, don't even try to play that. I can tell you don't like him either."

"Harrington, you don't even know me." Allison breathes back, eyes darting between him and the teacher. Steve huffs again, running a hand through his hair.

"Edwards, you don't have to know someone to know things sometimes." She rolls her eyes and shakes her head at the boy beside her. "Look, hey! Look." Allison's gaze finds his dark eyes. She was noticing that Steve wasn't always the most articulate, but when he wanted to, he could command an entire room.

"My offer from yesterday still stands. If you need me, find me." They stare into each other's eyes, faces inches apart in an effort not to be heard. It was a sweet gesture to a girl he barely knew but Allison had always taken pride in her ability to defend herself, she didn't need Steve Harrington or anyone else to do it for her.

"I appreciate the offer Harrington, I just don't think there is anything to be concerned about. Besides, if the time comes, I'm pretty damn good at taking care of myself."

Steve took her in with a guarded expression for a second before nodding, returning his attention to the front of the room.

Billy sat on top of a table in the back surrounded by perfectly coiffed girls and a few guys in letterman jackets when Allison walked into the cafeteria at lunch. He waved her over and she hesitated before making her way over slowly, she had planned to duck in, grab lunch and escape to the dark room with Jonathan. Allison thought he was much better company. She walked past Nancy and Steve on her way to the popular table and nodded at them both. Nancy smiled encouragingly, while Steve glared, wanting to respect Allison's decision but not liking any part of it. She flicked him as she strolled past, a small reassuring smile on her face. Steve rewarded her with a roll of his eyes.

"Hey, Billy" Allison spoke, sliding into the vacant spot at the table.

Billy pushed himself from the tabletop and sat opposite her, a smirk lining his mouth. "I'm glad you thought about it and decided to grace us with your presence."

"I'm glad you recognise my presence is a gift, Hargrove." Allison shot back, spearing a fry with her fork.

"Well you make us mere mortals fight so hard for it, how can it not be?"

Allison grinned at his witty reply. She observed that the table was full, mostly with guys that all watched the interaction waiting for Billy to strike. Three girls sat on the opposite end watching her with looks that varied from curious to malicious. The girl who glared at



her worst was the orange haired girl from this morning, she refused to take her eyes from Allison even when she was caught staring and whispered something into the blonde's ear next to her.

"Hey, I'm Allison." The girl introduced herself as Carol, the rest gave introductions, but Allison forgot the names as soon as they spoke them. She had been with them for a minute and already knew this wasn't her scene.

Carol continued to whisper to the girls around her and they all laughed, turning back to Allison with matching grins. Allison turns her attention back to Billy with a barely suppressed snort, this was why she didn't want to hang out on the popular table.

"Who was the guy you were messing around with over there?" Billy asked, his expression guarded. His eyes drifted to over her shoulder and Allison turned meeting Steve's eyes briefly.

"King Steve and his little Princess." One of the boys beside Billy snickered.

"King?" Billy queried, his eyes still appraising Steve lit with a challenge.

"Used to run this school before he tucked his tail between his legs and started hiding behind Nancy Wheeler. He's on the Basketball team with us."

Allison turns her attention back to Billy, stroking his ego might divert attention away from her Chemistry partner. Allison didn't need to glance over her shoulder to know Steve was still watching them like a hawk. "Second day in and you've made the Basketball team? Congratulations."

Billy's attention returned to her and he smirked. Crisis averted, Allison thought. "Yeah, played at my old school, the coach couldn't wait to get me on." Billy stole a fry from her plate as he spoke, his clear eyes finding hers again. Her stomach fluttered, she hated that it did.

"A future *Michael Jordan*? Or would a *Magic Johnson* reference be

more appropriate, Mr California?" Allison's smirk falling at the look of distaste that crawls over his features. "What? Not a Lakers fan?" She knew very little about the sport and what she did know had come from her Father who was an avid supporter, he said those two would be in the history books as two of the greatest of all time.

"Nah, I like the Lakers, just never saw the big hype about *Magic*. I think guys like *Larry Bird* don't get enough credit." His scowl disappearing when he realised Allison was watching him with confusion.

Silence falls between the two and Allison rushes to fill it. "How was your morning?" She smiles to cover her awkwardness. Billy had been staring at her since the moment she diverted his attention, she found it unnerving.

"Boring. I'll admit I've been thinking about lunch all day."

She nodded, attempting to hide her discomfort at the leer Billy had pasted on his face. Allison had been in situations more uncomfortable than a guy trying to remove her clothes with his eyes, but Billy had her on edge, what she couldn't figure out was why he was setting off warning bells. Allison put it on herself, she was uncomfortable being at the popular table, she didn't like the girls who were still whispering and giggling about her down the end, and she certainly didn't like them talking badly about her friends; even Steve.

"Oh, well who doesn't like lunch, I guess." Allison chuckles awkwardly.

Billy grins at her, leaning in slightly "Well my lunch has been great already, I get to look at you and you are... wow, you are delicious." He bites his bottom lip, his gaze finding her mouth and Allison must force herself not to shudder. Her cheeks heat with embarrassment as she mumbles self-conscious thanks.

"And you got to wipe out that freak junior, Byers. I've been waiting so long to see that nerd get his." A freckled kid, Allison thinks is named Tommy roars from a few seats down, the others laugh while Billy grins at their antics, rubbing his stubbled chin with his hand.

"I barely touched him, the kid needs to watch where he's going." Billy waved dismissively.

Allison frowned, trying to remember where she had heard the name 'Byers' before. Regardless, Billy's bullying of underclassmen had just solidified the end of their friendship; Allison had been a bully herself once upon a time and she promised to never return to that.

"He deserved it, he and his little zombie brother give me the creeps. Did you hear about Byers' brother, Allison? The little freak got lost in the woods last year. His Mom went psycho in the town square, it was mental." Carol sniggered, earning a similar reaction from the rest of the table.

It clicked they were talking about Jonathan and Will and Allison tensed instantly. She couldn't believe these assholes had the audacity to mock a grieving family. "I know the Byers, they're good people," Allison said evenly, the laughter around her dying off.

"You know those freaks? Jeez, Hargrove, you must be desperate to bring her kind around." Tommy sneers. The table is silent as they watch Allison whose expression had turned vicious, she noted Billy watched her with interest but chose to keep silent.

Allison's gaze slices through the boy and his smirk drops. "Seriously, what's your damage? Those boys are two of the kindest people I've ever met, actually." Allison huffs a laugh before continuing. "You have to be a special kind of asshole to make fun of what happened to them last year. But, you know, this doesn't even surprise me! I walked over here ten minutes ago and as I took you in all I could think was 'shit, I really don't want to spend my break with a bunch of losers.' I guess thanks, for confirming my suspicions, and for doing it in such a timely fashion! I still have forty minutes of lunch to enjoy."

Allison stood rapidly, ignoring Billy's call to reason. She hadn't noticed someone had come up behind her and slams into the firm body that stood directly behind her seat. Hands grabbed her shoulders, steadying her and she looked up to find the angry eyes of Steve Harrington. "Why am I not surprised to find you guys being assholes?" He says in a cavalier voice, eyeing Tommy, and Carol.

"Why don't you run back to your Princess, King Steve. Or have you finally realised she's a boring goody-two-shoes and gone for the smoking hot upgrade?" Tommy gestures toward Allison with his fork causing Carol to snort. "More like trash whore."

Billy glares at Steve's hands still resting on Allison but says nothing in her defence. Allison opens her mouth to unleash hell before feeling Steve squeeze her arm to stop her. "They aren't worth it Edwards." Allison sends one last glare in the tables direction before stomping toward the exit, she could feel every eye on her as she rushed through the crowd, Steve hot on her heels.

Allison burst through the double doors into the sterile hallway and begun pacing angrily. She couldn't believe the audacity those losers had to not only call her a whore but to pick on her friends! This was the one thing that never changed no matter which school you belonged to; bullies. Allison couldn't believe that she had once been on herself.

Steve leaned against a locker and watched the girl pace in front of him, wanting to calm her down but knowing anything he said would only make it worse. Eventually, he decided to test the waters when Allison hadn't slowed several minutes later. "Edwards? How're we doing?"

"You know that part in *Footloose* where you find out the Reverend's son, Bobby died on his way home from a night out dancing and that's why dancing and music are banned in Bomont? I was just thinking what an unbelievably stupid plot that movie has, did you know it's based on a true story? How insane is that!"

Allison stops her pacing, a few feet away from her very confused Chemistry partner. "What?" He chokes, his eyes widening in confusion.

"I know! Oklahoma, because like, of course, right! The human race astounds me sometimes." Running a hand through her dark hair, she signs forlornly. "Why'd you come over? I told you not to worry." Allison crosses her arms over her chest leaning against the lockers opposite to Steve and watches him with curiosity. He blinks apparently still trying to catch up with her thought process, Allison

would admit that sometimes her tangents didn't make sense, but he had asked how she was doing, she felt she owed him an honest response.

"I asked him too."

Allison and Steve both turn towards the quiet voice that spoke from the door to the cafeteria. Jonathan stood awkwardly, his hands pushed into his jacket pockets. He had observed his new friend becoming increasingly uncomfortable as the minutes ticked by and had swallowed his pride to ask Steve Harrington for help. Steve had declined at first but hadn't taken his eyes off the table since Allison had joined them minutes before. The second Tommy had opened his loud mouth for the second time, Steve surged from the table leaving a surprised Nancy and Jonathan in his wake.

"I should have kicked their collective ass on Jonathan, the shit they said about you and Will was..." She sighed, her hand finding its way into her hair again before it fell down to her denim-clad thigh with a muffled slap. "You didn't have to do that. Thank you, both." Allison smiled at them both. "It's pretty wicked to know you both have my back, even when I specifically ask you not to." She smirks. Steve smirks back, kicking himself off the lockers.

"We look out for each other around here, get used to it." Steve chuckled, scratching his neck awkwardly and nodding toward Jonathan. "I'm gonna motor, I'll see you around." He mumbles, heading back inside to Nancy.

"This school is so weird."

Jonathan laughs much to Allison's surprise and she grins. "You have no idea." The two decided to spend the rest of lunch in the library, chatting along the way.

"So, have you given any thought to my party suggestion?" Allison queries, watching Jonathan's face fall slightly. "Yeah, I'm really sorry but I can't go. I asked my Mom last night and she wants me to stay with Will tomorrow."

Allison smiles reassuringly, not liking the frown on his mouth. "Hey,

that's totally cool! I'm probably not gonna go now, either. I mean, Billy and his team will be there and it's smarter if I avoid them I think." Jonathan nods in agreement as he opens the door to the library for her. "What happened at lunch?"

Allison groaned sliding into a chair at the back, away from any prying ears while Jonathan took the seat across from her. "Tommy was being a jerk about Harrington and that was not... well great, but I changed the subject and was able to avoid defending Harrington's honour." Allison snorted, shaking her head before continuing. "Billy was hitting on me, talking about how good his lunch was because he got to see me and then Tommy bragged about what Billy did to you before lunch."

Jonathan looked away embarrassed, pushing his fringe off his face he met Allison's eyes with a small smile. "It was nothing, Tommy and Carol are assholes and they pushed me into Billy. I'm fine." He attempted to reassure Allison to no avail.

"It's not fine, I should have said more, they seem to have no idea the consequences their words have on people! And then they have the gall to say things about me and about Nancy! They're so lucky Harrington told me to back off, I was this close to going like full *Revenge of the nerds* on them!" Allison huffs, running her fingers through her hair. "And Billy! That asshole just sits there even after his friends call me a whore. He invited me over, I don't get it." Allison gestures throughout her speech wildly, she's sure she looks like a crazy person, but her anger had the best of her.

"Don't worry about any of them, Allison. They are all losers who are gonna live in Hawkins for the rest of their miserable lives in a cul-de-sac with two kids they hate while people like you, and me, Will, Hell, even Steve and Nancy are going to do things those morons couldn't even dream. I say this to Will sometimes and I think it applies here as well, 'Nobody normal ever accomplished anything.' We're Extraordinary; they aren't."

Allison felt tears pool in her eyes at her friend's impassioned words. The fire in Jonathan's eyes showing her he believed those words with every part of him, Allison believed them too. "Thank you for believing that. And thank you for going to Steve, I know that couldn't

have been easy for you." They smile at each other before Allison lightens the mood.

"So, motivational speaking or televangelist?"

Jonathan laughed, pulling his lunch from the brown paper bag on the desk before him. "Great Totalitarian Dictator actually." Allison grins, accepting half of the sandwich Jonathan offered and moving on to happier subjects, the tension from her interaction with Billy and the others forgotten.

Allison is pulling her pale blue sweater over her head after gym when she hears someone lightly clear their throat behind her. She turns, her ponytail flicking around with her head movement. Standing next to the sad grey locker beside hers was the blonde that Carol had been whispering to at Lunch. She smiled hesitantly, closing her locker she leaned against it, tension visible on her shoulders. "Hey, I'm Melinda, we met at Lunch?"

Allison nods stiffly, turning away from the girl to the bench between the rows of lockers, raising her foot she began retying her laces. "Look, I just wanted to apologise for what happened today, Tommy and Carol were like way out of line and I'm sorry I didn't say something to them."

Happy with her laces, Allison sits on the bench facing the girl who still leaned against her locker, her left hand running up and down her right forearm. "I appreciate the apology but it's not me that deserves it; that would be Jonathan, Nancy, and even Harrington. I'm a girl living in the 80's, 'Whore' is far from the worst thing I've been called."

Melinda nods in agreement, pushing off the locker when Allison went to leave. Gym class had been brutal, and she was well and truly ready to go home. "I was actually wondering if you could let them know I'm sorry? I used to know Steve before everything, but I don't know Jonathan or Nancy and I really would like them to know from now on anything that is said about any of you will be defended." Allison turns toward the girl adjusting the strap of her bag on her shoulder.

"Why do you even care? You've obviously been complicit in their crap for a while, I get that being in the popular group can seem like

the most important thing in the world, but why are you deciding now is the time to buck up?"

Melinda scratched a spot under her hair tie with her finger, sighing while she did it. "Honestly? I realised today that not one of the people at that table, not even Carol, would have my back like Steve had yours. I've been best friends with Carol since we were in like kindergarten and I can't believe that she would help me when I needed it. You've been here two days and you already have friends that are better than mine."

Allison nods in understanding, adjusting her bag again and pointing at the door. Everyone else had left long ago and she knew Daniel would probably be waiting for her before he biked home. "Look, I have to go, but how about this? I'll pass on your message to the others and when you're ready you can come join me for lunch and I'll introduce you, so you can apologise properly."

Melinda shoots Allison a relieved look and nods in gratitude. "Really? Thanks, Allison! I owe you like big time." With another nod, the blonde leaves Allison alone in the locker. She sighs leaving a few moments later.

Students still mill around the car park when she arrives a few minutes later. Allison can see Daniel standing with his friends and Nancy next to her car. Nancy is watching them yell at each other in exasperation. "Hey, guys, what's going on?" Allison jogs up, unlocking the car and throwing her bag on the front seat.

"Hey, Alli! We were just discussing the impact certain monsters like the *Aurumvorax* had in the D&D world. Apparently, I'm the only one who thinks a giant eight-legged beaver who steals your gold is the worst monster! Can you believe that?"

Allison stares open-mouthed at an irate Dustin, whose little speech seemed to have ignited the argument again. "No way! I would much rather face an *Aurumvorax* than *The Beholder*! You're just annoyed that you got cleaned out in that cave last time we played!" Lucas shouted back.

"Guys, you are forgetting the most powerful monster! *The Mindflayer*



is worse than all the monsters in the manual combined." Mike says, raising his hands toward the huddle to gain their attention.

"Umm, look as interesting as this conversation is... I want to go home." Allison shouts over the boys earning their attention. They all seemed to notice they were blocking her car and made toward the bike rack at the middle school. A chorus of goodbyes rang out before the squabbling began again.

Allison turned Nancy with an amused expression, "Want a lift?" Nancy nods, staring after the boys in confoundment.

"Did you understand anything they just said?" She asked, opening the passenger door, and sliding in.

Allison threw her bag onto the back seat and shook her head with a chuckle. "Nope, but they understood it so... I don't know, boys are strange." Nancy nods in agreement.

Nancy is unusually quiet and Allison glances toward the teen worriedly, pushing the key into the ignition but leaving the car off. "Are you okay over there?" She queries tentatively.

Nancy jolts, running her hands over her face with a sigh. "Yeah, I... Just, has anyone told you about Barbra Holland?"

Allison shakes her head; the name didn't sound familiar. Had she not met Barbra yet? Nancy nods in acceptance, a frown marring her face and her eyes misting over. "Barb was my best friend and last year around the same time that Will disappeared, so did she. She never came back." A tear dripped down Nancy's cheek and Allison grabbed her hand in support.

"I'm so sorry, Nancy, I had no idea."

"That's the problem, no one talks about Barb, she's gone! She's never coming back and I'm the only one who seems to care. Everyone talks about Will Byers the *Zombie Boy*, but no one remembers the kind girl who never did anything to deserve this!" Nancy pulls her hand away from Allison's, using it to wipe her tears away angrily.

"Do the Police know what happened?"

Allison notes that for a split second, Nancy tenses up at the question, averting her gaze to the passenger window before sighing quietly. "We were at a party at Steve's house and I wanted to hang out alone with him, so I sent her away and that's the last time I ever saw her. No one knows where she went, no one knows what really happened. She's gone, and it's all my fault."

"It's not your fault, Nancy."

Nancy shakes her head vehemently, more tears leaking from her eyes. "I sent her away, Allison. It's my fault."

Allison forcefully takes Nancy's hands within her owns, forcing the girl to look her. "Hey, hey, hey! This is not your fault; do you hear me? You couldn't have known what would happen, Nancy. Crying and blaming yourself doesn't help, Barb and it won't help you."

Nancy's eyes find Allison's and the girl vibrates with sadness. "I just want her to come back." Allison pulls her in for a hug.

"I promise I will do anything I can to help you find her."

Nancy nods, her body still shaking but she pulls away, wiping her eyes. "I'm sorry to lose it like this, I'm such a spazz. It's just Steve and me had a bit of an argument about it yesterday and we had dinner with her parents, it's really been bothering me."

"You are totally not a spazz and you don't have to apologise! I know you don't really know me, but I promise you can always come to me." Nancy smiles at the older girl.

"Thanks, Allison."

Allison pulls away from the school, honking to the boys as she went. "So" Allison begins, hoping to change the subject to something lighter. "I had an interesting conversation with a girl named Melinda in the locker room before."

Nancy glances at Allison with a frown, "Melinda? Like Carol's friends Melinda?" Allison nods in confirmation.

"Yeah, she apologised for what went down at Lunch, wanted me to

pass on that she was sorry to you, Jonathan, and Harrington. She said that Harrington coming over to help me out made her realise she didn't actually have anyone who had her back."

Nancy shrugged in understanding, "I get that, I guess. Carol, Tommy, and their crowd are horrible people. I mean, Steve used to be the most popular guy at school until he ditched Tommy and Carol and now all the 'popular' kids don't talk to him anymore. He still has most of the team and he has plenty of friends, but it's for the best, Steve wasn't the best person when he was with them." Nancy wrings her hands together with another shrug. "He told me once that he misses the time he thought those people were his friends before he woke up to it all."

Allison nods in understanding, Steve's fall from popularity was remarkably similar to her own. "I know what he means." Nancy frowns at her friend, who bites her bottom lip conflicted before opening her mouth again. "I used to be the most popular girl at my old school, I was such a horrible person Nancy, it feels like a nightmare sometimes." Allison shook her head, a sad smile marking her features.

"Sophomore year, a new girl started at school. Wakeford is like a quarter of the size of Hawkins, so you have to understand we never got new kids at school and I was so jealous of her. Nicole was so choice. She was like genuinely good, and everyone wanted to talk to her, all the cute boys wanted to date her. I absolutely hated her, she was nothing but kind to me and in return, I spread rumours about her and made her life a living Hell."

"I didn't stop until it was nearly too late. I didn't know she had a horrendous home life. Her Mom wasn't home much, she travelled for work and while she was away Nicole's Dad would get drunk and beat her." Allison swallows, tears forming in her eyes as she pulls up to the Wheeler house. "She didn't come to school for a few days and people were worried, and all I could think was 'this bitch isn't even here and she's taking away my spotlight? Gag me with a spoon.' I was that conceded."

"She lived in the house opposite mine, so on the second day of her missing school, I went to her house. I found her lying in a pool of her

own blood at the foot of the stairs in her hallway. She had been laying there for two days and nobody knew."

Nancy gasped quietly, placing a hand on Allison's arm in support. Allison wiped her eyes quickly, she hated reliving the memory. "I called an ambulance and I didn't leave her side until she woke up at the hospital a few days later."

"When she woke I told her how sorry I was, and she just brushed it off as if it was all nothing. She turned to me and she smiled despite everything and she said, 'Let's promise to always look out for each other from now on.' I agreed, and we became best friends pretty quickly after that." Allison smiled, tapping the steering wheel twice laughing awkwardly. "Nicole made me realise that all the people I thought were my friends, my boyfriend, everyone, they didn't have my back when I needed them. I stopped being that girl, the girl like Carol who is vain and vindictive and became someone I'm actually proud of."

Allison turned to Nancy with an uncomfortable chuckle. "Sorry, I just poured my whole sad story to you in a car where you can't escape." Nancy shakes her head, touching Allison's shoulder briefly and smiling reassuringly. "This car has been parked out the front of my house for a while if I wanted to leave I would. Besides, it's only fair after my episode from before."

"You are nothing like Carol and Tommy by the way, and you aren't your old self. I've known you for two days and you have been nothing but warm and kind to me and a little feisty toward Steve." They share a smile. "Don't take my word for it, you somehow got Steve and Jonathan to work together and if that isn't big time, I don't know what is."

Allison blushes, grinning at the younger teen. "Thanks, Nancy."

Nancy opens the door with a warm smile. "Anytime, Allison, after everything that's happened around here, we look out for each other." Allison beams at her new friend waving her off with a promise to see her tomorrow.

Allison pulled up her house feeling lighter, glad she was able to tell

Nancy her past but a little concerned about what Nancy told her, Allison thought it explained a little bit of the mystery that was Hawkins; everyone here had secrets. The journalist in her wanted to know them all.

Daniel pulled up on his bike not long after Allison and waved, swinging a leg over and walking toward her with a small frown. "What's going on Bud?" Allison questions, ruffling his hair. They walked up to the door together, Daniel stopping just before they entered. "Do you think this town is a bit strange?"

Allison turned to her brother with concern. "Why? Has something happened?"

Daniel shook his head quickly, frown still firmly in place. "No, it's just... everyone is so haunted by what happened to Will last year and no one will actually say what happened, every time something is spoken about, I get left out or they start acting weird."

Allison understood her brother's state of mind; she thought about what both Steve and Nancy had said to her today, 'we look out for each other.' She couldn't help but wonder if it had something to do with what happened to Jonathan and Nancy last year or if it was Will and Barbra's disappearances.

"Everyone experiences trauma differently, kid. I think whatever happened last year affected everyone in unusual ways and they are still learning to heal." She answers evasively. Allison had her own misgivings about the strangeness that was Hawkins, Indiana but decided not to burden him with them. Whatever had happened had changed the lives of all Daniel's friends but also all of hers.

"I get that, I don't know, I guess I just get a bad vibe sometimes, too much time playing D&D probably, expecting danger at every turn." Daniel shrugged. Allison wrapped an arm around her brother, opening the front door and heading into the house with a reassuring squeeze.

"There's nothing wrong with caution, especially if the *Rust Monster's* around."

## 6. Wednesday

**Hello my fellow travellers! I hope you enjoy this chapter, let me know what you think, I'm a little unsure about it. The song is another Aussie love of mine but I highly recommend watching the video if haven't. You might find a stranger surprise.**

*We can run with the headlights on  
Till we got nothing to lose*

*I don't mind if you wanna go anywhere  
I'll take you there*

*Chateau - Angus & Julia Stone*

### **Wednesday**

Allison was not going to that party. Or at least she wasn't until she ran into Jonathan.

"C'mon, it's one night out," Jonathan remarked quietly.

"Jonathan Byers, I've known you for two days and I know you well enough to know that you are the definition of the loner type; what's going on?" Allison stood with her arms crossed outside the Wheeler house. She and Daniel had arrived moments before and excited Will and Jonathan. The boys were all dressed as the *Ghostbusters* While Daniel wore a leather jacket, jeans, and a pair of dark shades to channel his inner Terminator. Allison had admitted she thought he looked badass and he hadn't stopped beaming since.

"Also, if you can recall, it was only like two days ago I asked you to tag along and you said no. Besides, Billy's gonna be there and I would prefer to just avoid him and his posse at all costs." Allison shudders, she had successfully avoided them today, only running into Melinda in the bathroom for a moment. It had been a quiet day for the teen who had spent her third day studying when she could no longer tolerate Nancy and Steve's overly affectionate displays, apparently, couple's costumes brought on a euphoria similar to Valentine's day.

Jonathan looked off into the distance before sighing and pushing his fringe to the side. "Nancy asked me to go and I really don't want to be stuck third-wheeling again." Allison watches the boy before her with a sorrowful expression, it was uncomfortably painful to watch them interact sometimes especially now that she knew about Jonathan's feelings.

"Fine, I'll go, but I'm doing this for you which means you owe me big time. You better help keep Billy away from me or I'm never talking to you again, got it, Dweeb?" Jonathan nods in affirmation, a small smile pulling at the corners of his lips. She already knew she was going to be abandoned the minute they entered the house, but she just couldn't say no to Jonathan, his awkwardness and timidity reminded her so much of Daniel sometimes.

So, that's how Allison Edwards ended up at a house packed full of sweaty teenagers on a Wednesday night. Just as she had suspected, despite his promises, Jonathan had abandoned her quickly in favour of skulking around and looking for Nancy. Allison had wondered around, filling a cup with a suspicious punch, and avoiding Carol and her friends, they had yet to spot her much to Allison's relief. *Motley Crue* played loudly and bodies jumped and danced, sloshing drinks into the carpet of some poor parent's house.

After the debacle of yesterday's cafeteria outing, Allison had made it her mission to avoid the crowd that Billy and Carol liked to hang around with. She wasn't one to be pushed around and the five minutes before she had snapped, and Steve had come over had brought to light the kind of people Billy, Carol, and their friends were; Assholes.

House parties weren't a thing in Wakeford and Allison realised at that moment as she sipped on her punch, they really weren't all the movies made them out to be. She was about to walk outside for some fresh air when she spotted a blond mane that could only belong to Billy Hargrove and turned away quickly hoping he hadn't spotted her.

His overconfident attempts at wooing Allison had failed but she was worried turning up might give him the wrong idea. Even if she was stupid enough to give him another chance at friendship his silence while his friends called her a whore yesterday had solidified his

cowardice in her mind, Allison couldn't forget that. Her turn had revealed another glorious head of hair and she sighed in relief as she made her way over to her Chemistry partner.

"Hermia and Lysander!" Allison jokes sipping her drink as she approaches her friends. "Harrington, I love the look."

Steve, pushed his glasses down the bridge of his nose and gave her a once-over, a smirk pulling at his mouth. "Glad you dressed up for the occasion, Edwards." Allison rolled her eyes and pushed Steve's glasses back up his face much to Nancy's amusement.

"Yeah, yeah, shut it."

Steve chuckles and wraps an arm around Nancy with a grin. "You look great, the high school movie extra, right? Totally believable." Allison laughs with a shake of her head at Steve's sass. She turns to Nancy who watched the two of them with amusement.

"*Lady Macbeth* actually, so watch your back Harrington."

Nancy laughs, poking her friend's leather clad arm lightly. "Please with that face? Just say your *Brooke Shields*, has anyone ever told you that you might have been separated at birth?" Nancy jokes.

Allison chuckles uncomfortably, with a roll of her eyes. "Yeah, I don't think *Brooke Shields* would be seen dead in something as couture as this." Allison jokes pointing toward her favourite jeans, an old biker jacket, and plain white tee tucked in underneath. "Besides, I don't look anything like her, I'm a mess." She jokes, sifting her fingers through her wavy hair and letting it fall down her left shoulder.

"You need to look in the mirror, you're gorgeous. And you look totally wicked, like always." Nancy compliments, wrapping her arm around Steve's waist.

Embarrassed, Allison blushes with another awkward chuckle and decides to change the subject. "Hey, have either of you seen Jonathan? *Iago* forced me along to this thing and then totally bailed on me." Allison took another mouthful of the punch, feeling her face warm and her fingers tingle.



"No, I haven't seen him yet. I'm glad he came, I feel like I've barely seen him this week." Nancy smiled, Allison didn't want to mention to the younger girl that a certain Senior had monopolized her time. She didn't want to cause trouble between the popular girl and the loner boy.

"*Shakespeare* on the brain?" Steve asks with a smirk enjoying the surprise on Allison's face. "I'm going to ignore the fact that you thought I, a high school senior wouldn't know a *Shakespeare* reference when I heard one and ask why you won't let the old codger rest in peace?"

"Hey, take that one up with the American education system, buddy!" Allison exclaimed, her English teacher had spoken in iambic pentameter for every class and it was starting to mess with her brain.

"So! I like the *Risky Business* theme! You both look ace!" Allison exclaimed when she felt her own awkwardness seep between the three of them. Nancy wore a cute ivory get up and Steve rocked a blazer and the ray-bans he'd been sporting around the school. Neither gets the chance to answer before shouting from the backyard can be heard over the pounding music.

Allison turns to the dance floor seeing Billy walking through with a smug grin on his face, his cronies chanting 'King Billy' behind him. He fingers the streamers that hang from the chandelier, cigarette dangling from his lips. Rolling her eyes, Allison turns away as he approaches the three of them. He slings an arm over her shoulders and the strong odour of cigarettes and cheap beer overwhelm her senses.

"We've got ourselves a new 'keg king' Harrington." One of the cronies' croons.

Yeah, eat it Harrington!" boasts Tommy, stepping up to Steve threateningly.

Billy and Steve face off, Billy with a smirk and Steve keeping his face expressionless. He removes his glasses, glancing at an uncomfortable Allison before returning his glare to Billy. Nancy walks away with a roll of her eyes and Allison sees it as her opportunity to escape Billy's

heavy arm.

Allison ducks away but isn't fast enough to escape Billy, who grabs her arm with a grin. "Where are you disappearing to, sweetheart?"

Allison attempts to remove her arm from his hand, throwing a tight smile toward the blond. "I'm going with my friend."

Steve whose hand had been resting against the door, the picture of cool and collected, stepped forward, taking Allison's forearm, and sliding his hand down until Billy was forced to remove his grip with a dark chuckle. Her hand slid into Steve's and he gave a reassuring squeeze.

Allison stared at Steve in surprise, Steve didn't notice her look however, his eyes continued to glare at a smirking Billy, who watched the two of them noting that they still held onto each other's hands. "Careful there, King Steve! Wouldn't want your girlfriend getting the wrong idea." Tommy cooed, pointing towards their proximity with his joker-like grin.

"I don't understand why you won't leave me alone, I've done nothing to you and neither has Harrington." Allison shot back separating from Steve to get in Tommy's face. She was sick of this guy tormenting her and her friends and she thought it past time he learned he was messing with the wrong girl.

"It's in the name of fun, sugar." Tommy laughs.

"King Steve has what I want, sweetheart," Billy speaks quietly, his deep voice washing over her, Allison's eyes turn to him as he stares at Steve over her shoulder, his cigarette still dangling from his mouth.

"I want to be King and for now I want you, and the only person I can see standing in the way of those things is your buddy, Harrington. So, he's gotta learn to get outta my way. I'm very good at getting what I want, and I always find a way, eventually." Billy remarked, his smirk dropping and a frighteningly dark expression taking hold. Allison didn't back down, she could feel Steve's hands on her shoulders, trying to keep her in place but couldn't feel it within herself to be frightened of the pathetic person currently attempting to crowd her

with his height.

"I don't belong to you and I don't belong to Harrington. I am my own person and while I make my own decisions I can promise your little fantasies of owning me will stay as just that; fantasies. I've continued to give you the benefit of the doubt and I can't figure out why. You've treated me like I'm a piece of meat and let your friends belittle me for your entertainment and still I wanted to like you." Allison shakes her head, at the Blond whose eyes finally met hers.

"You had a chance to be my friend and you blew it. So, I'm done, stay away from me and my friends, Billy. I won't ask again." With that, the girl walked away, flicking her long hair, and pulling a stunned Steve Harrington behind her.

They found Nancy scooping her cup into the punch Allison herself had enjoyed and Steve untangled her hand from the front of his blazer to try and stop the cup lifting to Nancy's lips. "Hey, hey, hey! Whoa, whoa, whoa, take it easy, Nance, Nance!" Nancy raised her arms in defiance filling the cup again.

"What? Were just being stupid teenagers for the night, isn't that the deal?" With that she upends the cup, the red drinking dripping onto her face. Steve watches in frustration as she wipes away the drops on her face and escapes to the dance floor.

Allison frowns as he watches her disappear, his hands leaning on the kitchen bench. "You okay?" She asks, her eyes losing Nancy in the crowd. Steve glances at her, his eyes finding their way back to the dance floor searching for the distinct ivory Nancy wore. He seems to think for a moment before he turns to Allison fully, taking the red cup from her hand and setting it on the bench.

"I'll be fine, I always am." Steve meets Allison's eyes again, worry dancing within them. "Are you okay? With the whole Billy thing, I mean. I should have just taken you away the second he opened his mouth, I'm sorry, Edwards."

Allison frowned, placing a hand on his arm briefly in reassurance. Her heart still feeling the effects of the adrenaline that had coursed through her when she confronted Billy and his wastoid friends

"Harrington, I'm not some maiden in need of defending. I am more than capable of handling myself, no matter who it is after me. I would hope you would have gathered that by now."

Steve's eyes drifted off before he seemed to shake himself off and smirk, nodding in agreement. "I know, you gave *Michael Myers* a run for his money back there. That was some scary shit, remind me not to mess with you." Allison chuckled with a roll of her eyes, reaching for her cup. Steve placed a hand on top to stop her.

"I need to go find Nance, but can you do me a favour? Don't drink any more of that stuff, it's not 'pure fuel' it's pure crap."

Allison huffs a laugh but nods in agreement before her thoughts fall to Nancy. "She seems so haunted by everything that happened." Steve's face falls at her words and Allison thinks that for all his bravado, Steve Harrington might be pretty haunted too. She found herself wondering again just what had happened to the kids in this town last year, Allison truly believed it all went much deeper than Barb Holland and Will Byers.

"I'll see you later, Edwards."

Allison finds herself sipping a cheap beer as she stands on the back porch taking in the cool Fall night. The crisp air made her want to run for the first time since Sunday, she normally didn't wait so long between jaunts, but had been so caught up in school work exercise has slipped her mind. Allison decided she would try and run tomorrow.

The back-door swings open and a handful of people tumble out, laughing and talking loudly as they ventured down the stairs and onto the grass to smoke. Melinda tripped out the door last, a laugh bubbling up as she closed the door behind her. Turning toward her friends, she notices Allison leaning against the bannister and grins drunkenly, pushing her curled blonde hair back into place. She was dressed as *Sandy* from *Grease* and she looked amazing in her black spandex bodysuit and sky-high heels.

"Hey, Allison! I wasn't sure if you'd come tonight, I'm totally glad you did."

Allison smiled politely at the girl, still unsure where they sat after the talk in the locker-room. "Yeah, I came with a friend. I wasn't going to let those posers stop me." Allison replied, raising her red cup. "You look great by the way, I love *Grease*." Melinda looks down at her outfit, smoothing it over her stomach nervously.

"Thanks! I was a little unsure if I could pull off something as iconic as *Sandy's* catsuit."

"You chose well, are you having a good night?" Allison asks politely. Melinda nods, crossing her arms over her chest against the breeze. "Yeah, I heard Billy and Tommy got into it with Steve. Did you see it?"

"I was there, gave Billy some of the serving I've wanted to give him since yesterday." Allison laughs lightly.

"No shit! Good for you, Allison. That creep had it coming. He really freaks me out, he's so intense and he takes himself way too seriously."

Allison laughs again in agreement. "Yeah, I've never really been into Peacocks." She quips making Melinda chuckle.

"Are you sure? I heard a few rumours about you and Steve." Melinda replies with a cheeky look. Allison raises her brow at the drunken blonde.

"Not even! Harrington is with Nancy. He's my Chemistry partner and my friend, besides I wasn't lying, I've really never liked Peacocks." Allison laughs.

Melinda wiggles her eyebrows and taps Allison on the arm with a giggle. "Well, not yet anyway. Steve is like a really special guy. He used to be a total asshole, but underneath all that he had a heart." Allison nods awkwardly her lips pulling tight in an effort not to laugh at the drunk before her.

Thankfully, someone down on the grass calls Melinda over and her head turns to the pack on the grass laughing, waving that she'd be over in a second. "I better motor, but have a good night okay? Make some new friends! Hawkins has some pretty righteous people."

"I'll try my best. See you later, Melinda." Allison grins.

Melinda heads down the stairs, one hand on the rail to keep steady on her heels and Allison heads inside, instantly missing the cool air as the stench of teenage sweat and cheap beer overwhelm her senses. Everywhere she looks people are dancing, and drinking. Allison thinks she sees Jonathan sweep across the kitchen but couldn't be sure. Allison thought he might be too good at lurking.

Melinda's words had caused an anxiousness in Allison that she couldn't shake. Did people really think there was something between her and Steve? She didn't like the idea of people thinking she could be the type of person to steal her friend's boyfriend, that was the old Allison. New Allison didn't want to date anyone, especially Steve.

"ALLI!"

Allison turns to her left, next to the bathroom is her very tipsy friend and Steve, speak of the Devil, she thought. Nancy wobbled as she waved her over before turning back to Steve and bopping to the rhythm of the song. "Hey! I've been looking for you like everywhere! We're being teenagers! Let's dance." Nancy yells excitedly. Her clammy hands grab Allison's and she pulls her further into the crowd leaving an amused Steve behind to watch.

The second they make it to the middle of the floor, Nancy lets go of one of Allison's hands lifting the other and spinning herself underneath it. Allison wasn't a dancer and the press of bodies around her made her uncomfortable, but she didn't want to let the happy teen down.

They swayed together, bopping, jumping, and giggling without care. People came up to join them, but the two teens paid little attention to anyone else. Nancy spun Allison and in the tilting world, she saw Steve watching them from the same spot, a friend having engaged him in conversation. Nancy noticed Allison's eyes had strayed to the serious looking boy and her smile fell as she followed her gaze.

"He thinks I blame him for Barb's death."

Allison frowns at the suddenly serious expression on Nancy's face, her

words were slurred as she stared up at Allison. "Who?" Allison asks confused.

"Steve."

"Do you? Blame him?" Allison shouted over the music, her eyes darting between Nancy's chocolate ones, the music seeming to dim as she waited for the answer from the drunken girl.

"Yes." She replies before flouncing over the kitchen, her grin returning.

She's standing alone desperate enough to contemplate a walk home when she spots Jonathan chatting to a girl dressed as a member of *KISS*. She smirks at the awkward guy as he shakes her hand and she feels like an asshole as she begins to make her way over to them.

This night had been insane, and she really wanted to go home and unpack it in the silence of her bedroom. Between the fight with Billy and then Nancy not only saying that Barb was dead but drunkenly saying it was Steve's fault, she really needed to sort her mind.

She is tantalizing close to the front door when she sees Steve trying to stop Nancy from drinking more of the dubiously labelled 'Pure Fuel.' Allison knows it isn't going to end well and hears the crowd watching shout 'oh!' in unison when Nancy spills her drink all over herself. Nancy mutters something and then drunkenly stomps away, Steve following her with an apologetic look.

They rush past Allison and into the bathroom and she watches and waits for them to emerge laughing and smiling like they always do. Allison had known them only a few days, but she had come to know them as the perfect popular couple who can jump over fractures and ignore rifts. Though Nancy's drunken admission proved to Allison that maybe at least she was a little more aware of the faults they had.

Her thoughts are disrupted a few moments later when Steve emerges from the bathroom, slamming the door behind him. He rushes to the front of the house, running a hand over his face. He brushes past Jonathan but doesn't even notice in his rush to escape. Allison doesn't hesitate, rushing after him. Jonathan nods at her as their eyes meet in

a silent agreement, he's already heading towards the bathroom as she leaves the house.

"Harrington! Hey, hey!" She shouts, running to catch up to his quickly retreating figure. His head down and she can see his fingers are pinching the bridge of his nose as he continues to stride hastily to his car.

"Harrington, please! Would you just wait!"

Finally, he stops to wait for her. "Hey, what happened?" She exclaims, gripping his upper arm and coming around to his front. Strands of his hair have fallen out of place and Allison knows Steve Harrington well enough to know if he isn't rushing to put them back into place, something must be terribly wrong.

Steve looks up at the sky with a sigh before finally speaking to her. "What do you want, Edwards?"

Allison squeezes his arm gently, "I want to know if you're alright, what happened?"

He shook off her comforting hand. "Why do you even care? We aren't friends, Edwards. You said it yourself, we hardly know each other." He spits angrily.

"I care because you are important to me, Harrington, just as important as Jonathan or Nancy, you are my friends. Will you please tell me what happened?" Allison said gently, stepping closer to him tentatively.

Steve gestures toward his chest with both hands. "I'm bullshit, that's what happened, Edwards. I'm bullshit, in a relationship that's bullshit because apparently, I'm a total moron who's in love with someone who doesn't love me back."

Allison stares at him in shock. "Nancy said she doesn't love you? That's impossible."

Steve scoffs pinching the bridge of his nose again before dropping his hand to his thigh with a slap. "I need to get out of here, I need to be alone for a while." With that he steps around her, heading to his car



dejectedly.

"Wait, Harrington!" Allison calls after him. "Steve, please!" He stops at the use of his first name, he's pretty sure he's never heard Allison call him 'Steve' before. He doesn't look back, but she speaks anyway, her voice soft and forgiving.

"Just... drive safe, okay?"

Steve sighs, running a hand through his mussed hair before he turns towards her. Her hand was pushed into the pocket of her leather jacket, it swallowed her tall frame, but Steve remembered thinking she looked like a badass. Concern lit her features as she ran her fingers through her dark hair, throwing it over her right shoulder.

"Do you need a ride home?" Allison blinks in surprise at the offer, his voice sounds so miserable. She comes to her senses and shakes her head.

"Byers drove you here, right?"

Steve ushers her towards the car. "He'll take Nance home, you probably don't want to be around for that, she's in the mood for the truth." A part of Steve didn't want Allison near Nancy right now, he didn't like what she'd said to him, he didn't want to imagine what she might say about him to Allison, He didn't know if he just wanted someone on his side at that moment, or if he wanted Allison specifically on his side.

"No, it's okay I only live a few streets away, I can just walk." Allison throws him a small reassuring smile, stepping back toward the party and pulling him out of his thoughts. Steve sighs, "You can't walk. I'll give you a ride, c'mon." He starts walking to his car again and Allison follows, "I'm fine, honestly. Harrington, hey, please you don't have to worry about me." They are at his car when he meets her gaze over the top of the car for the first time since he left that bathroom with Nancy. he looks heartbroken and confused and Allison can't say she blames him.

"Get in the car, Allison."

Allison gets in the car.

They are both silent, Steve already knew where she lived from Nancy. It wasn't uncomfortable, but Allison could feel her tension filling the car, she wanted to embrace him and try to take away his pain. Allison also wanted to bombard him questions, like why did Nancy say she doesn't love you? What happened last year? And most importantly, why does Nancy think you killed Barb? she chose to keep quiet, but the last question buzzed around her head, Allison knew Nancy hadn't been literal when she said she blamed Steve for Barb's death. The girl obviously carried a lot of guilt for choosing Steve over her best friend that night, but it wasn't her fault, and it certainly wasn't Steve's.

What Allison couldn't figure out was how Nancy knew she was gone, just yesterday she had been crying over her disappearance and now the girl was dead? Allison glanced at the boy beside her with a frown wondering what exactly the teens knew. Steve stared straight ahead, completely focused on the road, the car wobbled slightly when Allison spoke, she had startled him with her low voice.

"Do you know if there have been any new developments in Barbra Holland's disappearance?"

Steve peeks her way, the frown on his face deepening. "No, she's still missing last I heard. Why?"

"Just something Nancy said tonight is all, I thought maybe something had happened," Allison replied matching Steve's frown. Nancy had been drunk, it's more than probable she was just blabbering, she pondered.

"What did she say?" Steve asked in a veiled voice, Allison wasn't sure what he was trying to mask but she thought he sounded scared.

"She said Barb was dead, but she was really drunk, I'm sure she didn't mean most of what she said tonight." Allison placated.

Steve clenched the wheel tightly, staring ahead in the silence. He wasn't so sure drinking was an excuse for Nancy but an opportunity to express herself. It frustrated him that she had talked to Allison

about this, he knew she wanted someone to pay for Barb's death but telling Allison would just get her killed along with Nancy and himself. "Your probably right." He muttered.

The streets they drive past are lit with Halloween decorations and kids in costumes still mill about. She remembers being one of those kids not too long ago, she wishes she could go back to that. No worries or stress, just being a kid sounded really good right now, she thought.

"Do you ever miss being a kid?"

Steve glances at her quickly before his eyes return to the road. He's silent for a long time and Allison thinks he isn't going to answer her before his soft voice breaks the silence. "Sometimes. Everything is so much easier when you're a kid. No college pressure, no assholes, no Basketball team, no girlfriends. I miss that."

"I miss trick or treating and believing in Santa," Allison says wistfully, earning a low chuckle from Steve.

"It's not too late, you know." He replies, turning onto her street.

"Considering I literally caught my Mom kissing Santa Claus, I'd say yes, it is." She smirks at Steve, who shakes his head slightly with a small grin.

"I meant trick or treating, smartass."

Allison returns his grin as he pulls up to her house, giving her an idea. "Wait here for a second." Allison smiles at him, rushing from the car and up the footpath.

Opening the front door quietly, Allison reaches for the jar full of candy her Mom had bought and took a few chocolates, Daniel always nagged their Mom to buy the full size candy, for the leftovers and this year she had listened. Allison quietly closed the door, jogging back to Steve's car with a grin. He had watched the entire process from his car and followed her with his eyes, a small frown crinkling his brow.

Sliding back into the passenger seat she threw a Snickers bar into his

lap with a smirk. "Happy Halloween, Harrington."

Steve took the chocolate with a chuckle and fingered the plastic. "Know any tricks?" He asks, his eyes returning to hers.

Allison thinks around a mouthful of chocolate, her eyes twinkling in concentration before she remembers. "Oh! I can touch my nose with my tongue!"

Steve's face screws up at her laughter. "That's gross."

"Do you wanna see?"

"Obviously." He replies earning another laugh from the girl. Allison sticks her tongue out and flicks it up toward her nose. She feels it tickle the top of her cupid's bow and pulls her tongue away, scratching the itch it created. "You weren't anywhere near your nose, just so you know," Steve said, ripping open his chocolate.

"You are so full of crap. I felt it!" Allison exclaimed, sitting up to tuck her legs underneath her, her back turned toward the passenger window. "Besides, I totally bet you couldn't do it, so shut up, Dweeb." Allison finished taking another bite of her chocolate.

Steve huffs a laugh, swallowing his chocolate down. He's staring ahead, but Allison can see the amusement in his eyes. "I wouldn't even try, you looked really stupid."

"Ah, am I finally meeting the famous King Steve? Too worried about his looks to have fun?" Allison sassed. Steve rolled his eyes glancing at her with a raised eyebrow.

"Why are you still in my car?" He replies with a straight face causing Allison to burst out laughing.

"King Steve is like... snippy, I'll take note." She opens the door, throwing another chocolate at him; this time at his head.

"Hey!"

"Enjoy my peasant candy, my Liege. I'll see you tomorrow." With that she shuts his door and walks to the house, he waits until she's opened

the door, and turned to wave goodbye before he leaves with a wave of his own. Allison can see he's not smiling anymore and it makes her want to run back to the car again. She wanted to distract him and was happy it had worked for a while, but as much as she didn't want to see him sad she knew he needed to process what Nancy had said.

Allison heads upstairs seeing Daniel's light glowing from beneath his cream coloured door. He calls out for her to come in when she knocks and looks up surprised to see her enter. "I thought you were Mom, I didn't think you'd be back for ages." Allison shrugged, flopping on the end of his bed, and gesturing to the haul of candy he had spread before him.

"Good pull, shithead." She remarked fingering a *three musketeers*. Daniel yanks it away from her with a growl.

"Get your own, shithead." He replies, sweeping it all back into the bucket beside his bed.

"Rude."

"Rude for assuming."

Allison chuckled, resting her hands on her stomach, and staring at the ivory ceiling tiredly. "You smell like beer and sadness," Daniel remarked in disdain.

"Not even!"

"Even."

"Yeah, that's the smell of Highschool, get used to it," Allison replied with a grin, accepting that the smell of the party had seeped into her very soul. They are both quiet for a while, Allison glances over to see Daniel picking at the skin around his thumb. "What's up, Kid?"

Daniel looks up a troubled look on his face. He glances away before sighing and meeting Allison's eyes again. "Will had an attack while we were trick or treating and Mike wouldn't let me help. They were both acting weird all night and then Will just disappeared, and we found him hiding in someone's backyard and he was shivering, it was strange."

"What do you mean Mike wouldn't let you help?" Allison asked, sitting up with a frown.

"When we found Will, Mike made me leave. He said I can't tell anyone what happened, and that I wouldn't understand if he told me what was going on." Daniel shrugged.

"That is strange." Allison agreed. She sighed rising to a sitting position and watching her brother with concern. "I think you were right about this place, Bud. Something strange is going on."

## 7. Thursday

G'day again! I'm going to be updating every fortnight for the next few chapters, just to get ahead in the story again. I've had an eventful few weeks! My Mum had a little visit and we went to the Grand Prix which was awesome but it's put me behind on my writing. Anyways enjoy the new chapter, please let me know what you think!

You were so bright, I was so blind  
I could have said that you were all mine  
Why did I leave you on the fault line?

*Fault line - Jack River*

### Thursday

Nancy stood at Allison's locker when she arrived for lunch. The girl smiled sheepishly, hugging her books to her chest tightly.

"Hey."

Allison opened her locker shoving her books in and grabbing her prepacked lunch, she had decided to take advantage of a quiet period and go for a run around the track. "Hey, how're you feeling?"

Nancy huffs a laugh, staring at her shoes. "Like I got hit by a truck. I'm really sorry about last night, I remember like barely any of it, but I think I ditched you on the dance floor which is super uncool."

Allison shrugs, matching footsteps with the teen as they head toward the gym and by chance the cafeteria she wondered if Nancy remembered the conversation they shared before she had walked away. "It's fine, you have nothing to apologise for with me." Nancy sighed in relief, glad her new friend didn't hold her actions against her, she knew Allison would be understanding; Nancy thought she might be the kindest person she'd ever met.

Jonathan waits for them at the door of the cafeteria, smiling when he spots Nancy. She touches his arm in greeting. "Did you want to join

us for Lunch?" Nancy offers, sharing a quick smile with Jonathan before turning to her.

Allison shakes her head, a small frown creasing her brow as she observes the proximity of the pair. She wanted to ask Nancy about Steve but didn't think it was her place, she had seen Steve briefly that morning and he had seemed dejected and upset while Nancy acted as if nothing had changed.

"Thanks, but I'm gonna motor, the track is calling me today. It was lovely outside this morning and I haven't been for a run in like forever, My Dad and I usually go together but works been keeping him busy." Allison has to force herself not to roll her eyes at Jonathan who stared at Nancy with a small smile. He was doing a terrible job at hiding where his attention currently lied.

"Oh! You never told me what your Dad does for work? Must be important if he's been so busy." Nancy remarks a curious smile on her face. Allison realised that Nancy was right, in all their conversations she had never spoken about her Mom or her Dad except that one time with Jonathan on Monday.

"Your right, that's so weird of me, I'm usually the first to brag about my Dad." She thought maybe not seeing him around had pushed him from her mind. "He's a scientist, he works for Hawkins Laboratories. His new job was the whole reason we moved here actually." Allison grins, failing to notice that Jonathan's head whips to her, his eyes wide, her attention on Nancy.

Nancy opens and closes her mouth a few times before forcing a smile onto her face and crossing her arms over her chest. "That's so interesting! What does he do in the Lab?" She queries, false cheerfulness raising the pitch of her voice.

"Um, I don't really know, actually. My Mom just always says he's off saving the world." Allison laughs awkwardly beginning to pick up on the sudden tension in the corridor.

"Oh, that's so cool! I've never known anyone who actually works at the Lab, it's kind of taboo around here." Nancy replies, her voice still unusually high.



They all stand there silently, Jonathan and Nancy sharing a look before they return their gazes to Allison. She takes a step back, jabbing a thumb behind her with another awkward chuckle. "Well, I better go, I wanna get as many laps in as I can... I'll, uh, see you guys around, I guess." The pair nod stiffly and she turns on her heel with a wave, speeding toward the exit and into the crisp Fall air.

She turns back once, seeing Jonathan and Nancy still standing in the hallway, their heads close together as they whispered at each other frantically. Her Dad had told her before they moved that some people in Hawkins didn't like the Lab because of the clandestine projects they undertook.

He said that some had even been hostile toward him when they found out on his previous visits. Allison assumed that Nancy and Jonathan weren't fans of the Lab either, she just hoped the hostility her Father faced wouldn't be her fate also. If Nancy and Jonathan were to turn on her Allison would be devastated.

Allison changed into her gym clothes in the locker room wondering what rumours the pair had heard about the Lab before making her way to the outdoor track and warming up. The crisp weather had brought about a thin layer of fog that misted over the track and gave the woods on the opposite end an eerie appearance. She started at a slow jog and picked up speed gradually, allowing her body to acclimatize.

The biggest rumour she had always heard about her Father's previous Lab was that they harboured Russian spies, attempting to force them to spill international secrets. Allison had never believed that but she did always assume that her Father helped to protect her and the rest of America; it's what her mother had always taught her. She wondered if maybe Hawkins residents thought the same about their own homegrown Lab.

It was haunting as she ran, picking up speed to silence her thoughts. Allison wished she had brought her Walkman with her, so she had the company of something other than the creak of wood every time the wind blew or the constant cheeping of crickets. She remembered she had dismissed the thought this morning as she got ready, thinking it would be annoying to have to hold it while she ran. The

green shorts and a grey shirt that made up her gym uniform didn't have pockets much to her annoyance. Right now, she would give anything to have the device in her slick hand while *Fleetwood Mac* soothed her thoughts.

Feet pounding on the brick coloured track, she worked on her breathing, hoping to distract herself from the overcast day. On her second lap past the woods she stopped abruptly, swearing she heard a deep growl coming from within the trees. Allison had never heard a growl like that anywhere except a horror movie, it was deep and rumbling cutting off suddenly to give way to the return of the melodious cheeping of bugs.

Straining her eyes, Allison couldn't make out anything but dark wood and fog. She decided her mind was playing tricks on her but watched for a minute more just to be safe. Knowing Will and possibly Barb had gotten lost in these woods did little to ease the discomfort she felt now that they currently surrounded her.

Blood rushed to her ears, blocking out any other noise but the pounding of her heart and the false sound of waves crashing to shore; reminding her of her Mother placing a sea shell over her ear when she was young. Shaking her body out, Allison turns away from the woods. Fear had gotten the best of her because she comes forehead to nose with the concerned face of Steve Harrington and screams in fright. "Holy shit, Harrington! Make some noise next time!"

Allison grabbed her forehead in frustration, the collision hadn't been hard enough to hurt just frighten her. She was thankful he was slouching like usual, a shot from his jaw would have been a bitch.

Steve frowns, concern still written in his eyes. His hands are resting on his hips, pushing the grey material forward. "I called your name like five times, Edwards. Are you doing okay?" He asks eyes sliding toward the section of the forest she had been staring at intensely. "Did you see something?"

Allison's gaze returns to the trees again, she could almost swear she could see something milling about. Shaking her head with a frown, she matches Steve's stance as she attempts to regulate her breathing. Had he really called her name five times? She struggled to believe

she hadn't heard him. Feeling in the moment before he had snuck up on her and her blood had rushed to her ears for seconds, every minute sound was infinitely louder.

"No, I thought I heard something, but I was just being stupid. The fog just crept me out, it looks like a damn slasher movie out here today." She dismissed, her gaze returning to him. Steve seemed to accept her answer, glancing over one last time before eyeing her up and down.

"So, you run?"

He wears the same sports uniform she was wearing currently; his hair was a mess and his cheeks slightly red from exercise. "Yeah, helps me clear my head." Steve nods in understanding admitting he had been on the court doing much the same.

Allison invites him to run with her and he accepts, keeping a good pace. It's quiet again, like before but Allison realises she's not scared or nervous despite still hearing the ominous whispers of the wilderness. Steve's measured breathing beside her helps to block it all out and settle her.

"Have you seen Nancy?" He asks tentatively, breaking the long silence. Allison looks at him quickly, returning her gaze ahead. The look on his face made her not want to tell him the truth, she decided he was a big boy and there was no point keeping it secret.

"Yeah, just before. She was having Lunch with Jonathan."

He nods once, falling into his own head for a moment before surprising her with a smirk. "Let's race. First to the finish line wins. Go!" He speeds off before she has time to even process his words, leaving her in the dust.

"Hey! Harrington, you cheat!"

Allison takes off, pumping her arms as she quickly gains on him, he's quick and obviously in decent shape from basketball but can't match the speed years of running had given her. She overtakes him easily with 200m to go and pushes herself to her limit, crossing the line a

good ten seconds before he does.

Collapsing to the floor she laughs at the stunned look on his face as he joins her. "You totally weren't even running, I actually think you flew." He exaggerated earning a laugh from the brunette as she leaned back on her hands, trying to open her lungs to more air.

"That's what you get for being a dirty rotten cheat, Harrington."

They are quiet of a moment, nothing between them but rough breaths misting the air. Falling back with a sigh, thoughts of the previous night cause a frown to mar the teens face. Allison wanted to thank Steve for taking her home, it had been on her mind most of the day.

"What's in your head, Edwards?" Steve asks, humour swirling in his eyes. Turning her head to the side Allison takes him in and returns his easy smile. His arm rests on his raised knee and his features are free of the sadness she had seen underneath the surface since last night.

"I was just thinking of how to thank you for taking me home last night without ruining the mood and I was also thinking that if *Cyndi Lauper* wants to be the feminist icon of our time she needs to stop letting men write her music and hire a hit on *Madonna*." Allison replies sitting up and crossing her legs.

"Has anyone ever told you that your brain is a mess?" Steve asks, peaceful expression enveloped by a small smile.

"I tell myself that everyday but thanks for the reminder."

"Your welcome, for the reminder and the lift."

Allison grins at the boy across from her and Steve laughs lightly, nudging Allison's knee with his foot. "I knew I'd need a head start but jeez." He gestures to the track behind him, bringing the conversation back to there race. "Have you considered trying out for track?"

"That was my question exactly." A gruff voice says from behind them.

They both turn finding an older man wearing a blue vest over a long-

sleeved grey shirt and a matching blue cap. He's holding a mug and a whistle rests against his chest. "Hi, coach. This is Allison Edwards, she started here on Monday. Edwards this is the gym teacher and my basketball coach, Coach Anderson." Steve introduces them, pushing himself up from the ground and offering a hand toward Allison, which she accepts gratefully.

"You've got some speed in ya, kid." Coach Anderson compliments gruffly.

"Thank you, Sir," Allison replies with a blush.

"I have a spot on the team if you're interested, we have a cross country meet a town over in a few weeks, it would be a fantastic opportunity to test your skills." The Coach sips from his mug, eyeing Steve, who still hadn't fully caught his breath from the sprint. "How about you come see me before Basketball practice today and let me know your decision, I'm sure you know sport looks great on a college application, Miss Edwards."

Allison nods in conformation a grin pulling onto her mouth. "I do, thank you for the opportunity, Sir. I'll definitely come by later."

Coach Anderson nods before turning back toward the gym. "Work on your cardio, Harrington. I don't ever wanna see my star player out of breath from 800m ever again."

Steve scratches the back of his head with his left hand, his right resting on his hip as he winces at his Coach. Allison laughs at his pained face, falling back to the ground to do her warm down stretches. She hadn't got in as many laps as she'd hoped but she felt lighter and her thoughts cleared regardless. Allison already knew she'd love to give the team a go, she had never been on a team before and wondered if it was an opportunity to make new friends and test her skill.

Steve joined her with a snort, rolling his eyes at her as he copied her stretches. "Thank you for coming out and running with me, Wastoid. It was nice to have some company other than my Dad for once." Allison forced a laugh as thoughts of her Dad reminded her of the conversation she'd had with Nancy and Jonathan not long ago, her

euphoric mood instantly dissipated.

"Hey, it was fun, maybe we can do it more often, help keep me in shape," Steve replied, jokingly, a grin on his face.

Allison smiled at the boy and agreed, inside she wondered if Steve would have the same reaction that Nancy and Jonathan had when they found out about her Dad. It nagged on her again that maybe they wouldn't want to be her friend anymore. She decided not to bring it up with Steve, she didn't like the thought of Steve turning on her too.

"How are you doing with everything from last night?" Allison feigns a casual tone, straightening her legs in front of her and reaching for her toes. Steve had done an excellent job at hiding how he was feeling since he came down to the track, but she knew he wouldn't be travelling as well as he pretended; He wore his heart on his sleeve, and in his eyes. "When I saw Nancy before she told me she didn't remember much of the night."

Steve sighed leaning back on his arms as he watched Allison hold the bottoms of her feet and breathe deeply. He knew she would ask about his wellbeing eventually, she could be a totally neurotic spitfire, something he knew from personal experience, but at her core she was kind.

Steve knew she wasn't asking to be cruel or to spread rumours about the broken-hearted King but because she was his friend and she wanted him to be okay. He liked that she would get defensive about he and Jonathan having her back but stood by them ferociously.

"I don't even know what to make of it yet, we need to talk but I just don't know how to get ready for that, you know?" He finally answered as she rose, watching him with sorrowful eyes.

"It'll all work out, Harrington, the two of you have obviously been through a lot together, love like that doesn't just... like disappear, you know?" Allison replies with a reassuring smile. Steve notices for the first time that Allison has a dimple on her left cheek when she smiles.

"Yeah, I guess you're right."

Ten minutes before the final bell rings for school, Allison ducks out of her Spanish class and heads over to the gym to meet the coach. It hadn't taken the girl long to decide that she would be joining the track team, the coach had been right, sport looked good on a college application.

The gym is quiet except for the sound of squeaking wheels coming from the storage room, a few moments later, Coach Anderson pulls the dark blue doors; similar to his hat and vest open, dragging a trolley filled with basketballs along. Coach spots her and nods in greeting.

"Good, you came. Did you think about it?" He asks tossing her a basketball. Catching it with ease, Allison turns on her foot and sinks the ball into the hoop on her first try from the three-point line, earning a scoff from Anderson.

"Did you wanna try for the Basketball team too?"

Allison grins, fetching the ball and tossing it back from across the court. "Nah, but I'm interested in that opening on track if it's still free, Coach."

Anderson nods again and points toward the locker room with his thumb. "Alright, suit up and let's see what you've got." Allison wastes no time changing into her gym uniform for the second time that day, tying her long hair high off her neck and joining her coach on the court again. Stretching out her arms and legs, she eyed the clipboard and stopwatch Coach Anderson now held as he waited in his spot beside the trolley of balls.

"Ever done a beep test before?" Allison shook her head.

"What your gonna do is run from one end of the court to the other before I blow my whistle, you'll have to go a little quicker each time. We're short on time so usually, you would get one fail before you're out but today you only get one go at this before the team gets here..." He checks his watch and grunts, "In about ten minutes. Got it."

"Got it," Allison confirms jogging into position and awaiting the first whistle. Before Coach Anderson can blow the whistle the doors to the gym swing open and close with a bang, revealing a hurried looking Melinda, who rushes to the Coaches side with an apology. "Sorry, Coach! Mrs Howard wouldn't let me leave class until right on the bell." The coach waves away her apology and Melinda turn towards Allison her eyes widening slightly. "Allison! I didn't know you were a runner."

"Melinda is the Captain of the team and leads the training sessions when I'm off with the Basketball team." The Coach explains. Allison nods and watches as he hands Melinda the clipboard to write up her times.

The second the whistle sounds she runs as fast as she can, wanting to test out how much time she would have in-between each blow. She counted nine seconds after the second whistle and slowed her pace down accordingly for the next one. Allison felt like she was just starting to get the hang of it when she started to struggle, picking up her pace she ran again only just making it to the wall in time.

"Let's go, Edwards, push it! Five seconds on the clock." Coach Anderson yelled after another blow of the whistle.

She sneakers squeaked on the glossy floor as she ran full tilt toward the brick wall, slamming her hands against it, only to turn and jet off again a second later. Focusing on nothing other than the pumping of her legs, the whistle in Coach Anderson's mouth, and the brick walls she ploughed herself into repeatedly. She heard him shout 4.3 seconds over her heavy breathing and pushed as hard as she could, the whistle blowing just before she crossed the line.

Bracing her hands on her knee's she forced air into her lungs, sweat dripping from her forehead and hairline onto the floor below. Wiping it away with her wrist, she straightened up with a whoop, turning toward Coach Anderson and Melinda she was surprised to find the entire Basketball team sitting in the bleachers watching.

She spotted Steve, who looked impressed. Some of the boys murmured to each other all showing looks of surprise at her speed. "Congratulations, Miss Edwards, you've made the track team."



Allison's head swivels to the left spotting Coach Anderson in the same spot as before, going over Melinda's notes on his clipboard. He doesn't even raise his eyes toward her, focused on his work. Melinda claps excitedly, moving toward her and passing her a small towel to wipe her face. Allison takes the towel gratefully, wiping her face. Allison grins, straitening her ponytail before resting her hands on her hips.

"That was so tight, Allison! Whoa, girl can you fly." Melinda says earnestly, taking the towel from her with a smile.

"Thanks, I totally think I might be dead though," Allison replied, still trying to regulate her breathing. Melinda laughs patting the girl on the arm.

"This is like nothing compared to training." The girl replies earning an eye roll from Allison.

Coach Anderson finally glances up gesturing her and Melinda over before turning to the bleachers and bellowing at the boys to get into gear. They scramble up grabbing basketballs from beside Allison and the Coach and starting drills. Steve offers her a smile as he walks past, placing a hand on her shoulder briefly. Matching his smile, she returns her attention back to her Coach who hands her a form to get signed by her parents.

He gives her a copy of her times and breaks down her last three runs explaining her errors and why she missed the whistle. He tells her that the team meets every Wednesday after school and not to be late next week. Allison thanks him again and he dismisses it, turning his attention toward his Basketball team properly. "You earned your spot, Edwards. Your times are already on par with some of the other kids on the team, it's a great result." Melinda nodded in agreement.

"You're going to fit in with the team perfectly." She adds.

With a final nod and a massive grin on her face, Allison retires to the locker room, doing a few quick stretches before changing and tidying her hair into a new pony. She decided to leave her cream sweater off, stacking it on her Spanish books, Allison tucked her basic white long-sleeved shirt into her favourite blue jeans and exited back to the

court, books in hand. She glanced over briefly catching Billy's eye for only a moment. He smirked at her before he returned to the game, seeing Steve had the ball he went to defend against him, a mischievous look in his clear eyes.

Allison can see his mouth moving as he taunts Steve, but the slap of the ball hitting the court masks his words. Whatever he said causes Steve to glance up at Allison briefly, anger in his eyes before he says something back. Billy finally makes his move after seconds of holding Steve off, pushing him to the ground and taking the ball, it was a dick move and everyone knew it but chose to stay out of it.

She wanted to check if Steve was okay and give Billy the lashing he deserved but thought better of it, embarrassing Steve, and herself in front of the whole Basketball team seemed like a stupid move; instead, she left. Allison knew not getting a reaction from her would probably piss the blond off more anyway.

Melinda waited for her outside, offering to walk her to her locker with a smile. "I'm assuming you didn't have as much fun as I did at the party last night? Like I'm trying to imagine having to do the beep test hungover and it's totally making want to barf." Allison pushes the heavy blue door to the main building open with a laugh, letting Melinda through first.

"Yeah, I cut out early actually. It was a little too crowded for my taste."

Melinda nodded in agreement. "I know after I saw you I went inside again for like a minute then turned around and went straight back to the grass. It smelled so bad in there it was mental, and besides those heels that went with the catsuit were a total bitch."

Allison chuckled stopping in front of her locker and swapping her books out quickly, noticing a note flutter to the ground. "Yeah that was my first High School party and I'm confident it'll be my last." Allison jokes, bending to pick up the tightly folded paper.

"Secret admirer?" Melinda jokes as Allison opens the note with a frown.

**Meet me at my house tomorrow, 5 pm**

**Nancy.**

"Just Nancy, she wants to hang out after school tomorrow," Allison replied with a shrug falling into step with Melinda.

"Wonder why she couldn't ask you tomorrow? Strange she would leave a note." Melinda cocks her head in confusion, but Allison just shrugs. At least Nancy wanted to talk to her, she thought relieved. Maybe she could explain why she and Jonathan had behaved so bizarrely at Lunch.

Daniel gets home late that evening ploughing straight into Allison's room and flopping on her bed with a tired groan. Allison sat at her desk best over her English homework but turned toward the sandy-haired kid with raised brows. He laid stiff as a board, head buried in her patterned duvet cover, a favourite of her mothers.

"Dustin found a Lizard brought it to school and then lost it."

Daniel's words are quiet and muffled and Allison has to strain to hear them. "What sort of Lizard?" She asks, middle-schoolers were weird.

Daniel sat up with a huff, crossing his legs beneath him. "That's the thing, we don't actually know what sort of Lizard. Dustin's convinced Dart is an undiscovered species. Dart is the Lizard, he's green and slimy and creeps me out. Will didn't like him either."

Allison taps the red eraser on the tip of her pencil against her cheek, a frown on her face. "Lizards can be notoriously green and slimy, it's probably just some garden variety kind that's a little greener or a little slimier than usual." She dismissed, watching the frown on her brother's face deepen.

"Well it went missing so I guess we don't have to worry about it, the boys were acting really weird again when Will said he didn't like it, but Mike said he went home before I could talk to him." The boy sighed again, meeting his sister's eyes with a lost expression. "I don't know, it feels like Max and I are constantly being left outta the group and I don't know why."

Allison's heart broke for the kid who stared at her dejectedly, she rose from her chair gingerly, legs stiff from the test earlier and joined him on her bed, giving his shoulder a squeeze in support. "I'm sure when they're ready they'll tell you what's been going on, bud. The four of them went through something huge last year, with Will so just give them some time." Daniel nods in agreement, a sullen look still present on his face. "Now, I think Mom just called us for dinner, let's go before she comes up here and whoops us."

Her brother smiled, and she forced a smile of her own, wishing she could take her own advice. The truth was, Allison knew her friends were also keeping secrets from her and the voice in her head continued to remind her that she wanted to know what those secrets were.

As she sat with her family at the dinner table, her Father absent again, Allison couldn't help but wonder if maybe her get together with Nancy tomorrow would be the perfect opportunity to gain some answers.

"I made the track team at school today," Allison announces a proud smile on her face. Mary beams at her daughter, patting her hand gently.

"Congratulations, sweetheart! I'm so happy for you."

Allison grinned at her mother before shoving mashed potatoes in her mouth. "Yeah, I was running with Steve at Lunch and-" Allison winced at her Mothers shriek of excitement and instantly realised her mistake.

"Who is Steve? You've told me nothing about a 'Steve' I want to know everything." Mary wails in joy, apparently already picturing her oldest child's march down the aisle to a faceless Steve. Allison rolls her eyes glancing at her Brother who smirks knowingly.

"Steve is my friend, Mom, just my friend. Before you lose your mind, he's my friend Nancy's boyfriend so no, nothing is going on or will ever be going on between us. We ran, the Coach saw me run, I did a beep test, I made the team."

The Mother deflates slightly before perking back up and returning her thoughts to the happy news. "I'm so proud of you, Alli! I'm glad you've made friends and I'm so glad you have more opportunities to shine in Hawkins."

"That's totally tubular, Alli," Daniel said, twirling pasta around his fork.

"Totally tubular, huh? Where are we, the gnarly beaches of California?"

Allison went to bed not long after dinner, exhausted from all the physical activity. She made a note to call Nicole on the weekend and catch her up on everything. She was surprised Nicole hadn't already called to get all the gossip but knew she was probably just as busy with school as Allison had been herself.

As she fell asleep, Allison found herself hoping that everything with Nancy would be cleared up tomorrow and they could return to being friends, she had only known the girl a few days but already didn't want to imagine a Hawkins without Nancy.

## 8. Friday

**Hello friends!**

**I cannot believe over 20 people follow this little story of mine!  
You make me glad I did finally post it :)**

**I'm so excited, we are finally getting to the fun stuff. I've had so much fun writing these last two weeks and I really hope it shows. I've been listening to Hayley Kiyoko on repeat all week, Lesbian Jesus has given me all the FEELS! I've nearly finished and have already started the sequel! I'm getting way ahead of myself but I'm so ready to show you more of Allison and who she is. As always let me know what you think. Disclaimer in the opening.**

*We could be bigger and brighter than space  
Ain't no running away*

*Need you to be sure.*

*What I need - Hayley Kiyoko feat. Kehlani*

### **Friday**

Allison was pissed.

It was Nancy who had begged Allison to meet her at her house and she wasn't even here. In fact, Allison hadn't seen Nancy or Jonathan all day. Maybe she should have been concerned but after how they left things yesterday she didn't really know where they all stood. Allison was curious, she was glad she wouldn't be spending her first Friday night in Hawkins alone though, and she could finally get some answers from Nancy.

But now here she stood, at the front door of the Wheeler house, with the door closed in her face from Mr Wheeler who had obviously never learned manners. Was this a game? Allison didn't think Nancy was the type of girl to trick her into some stupid joke. She thought that Nancy was her friend.

Red-faced and blinking away embarrassed tears, she turned away

from the Wheeler house and spotted Steve rambling to himself as he walked toward her a dozen roses in hand, Allison stopped him half-way.

"Harrington?"

He looked up from the roses in his hand, a frown creasing his forehead. "Edwards, what are you doing here?" He asks, taking in her glassy eyes and red-tinged cheeks. He almost asks if she's okay, before closing his mouth.

Allison glances at the roses with her eyebrow cocked, hoping he doesn't notice the humiliation written all over her face, she doesn't meet his eyes. "Nancy's not here." Steve runs a hand through his annoyingly perfect hair in frustration and opens his mouth before he's cut off.

"Steve? Allison?" Allison turns to her left, seeing Dustin crossing the grass in a rush.

"Dustin?"

He has a headset on over his cap and a look of absolute determination on his face. "Those for Mr and Mrs Wheeler?" Dustin asks, Steve brings the flowers up in confusion.

"No." He replies with a frown.

Dustin snatches them from his hand and marches towards his car. "Good."

Steve turns after him a bewildered expression on his face. "Hey. What the Hell, Hey!" Dustin doesn't turn toward Steve, continuing toward the car.

"Nancy isn't here."

Allison frowns at how the kid could know that but moves up behind Steve who was watching the kid dejectedly. "Where is she?" He asks. My question exactly, Allison thinks.

"It doesn't matter, we have bigger problems than your love life."

Dustin opens the door with his free hand and finally turns to Steve and by default Allison who had made her way to his side and was watching the whole interaction with an irritated frown on her face. "Do you still have that bat?" He asks, and Steve raises his hands in exasperation.

"Bat? What bat?" Dustin waves the flowers in his hand and sighs,

"The one with the nails."

Steve glances at Allison who whispers, "Uh, nails?" incredulously.

"Why?"

"I'll explain it on the way."

Dustin slides into the front seat of Steve's car. Steve hesitates for a second before rushing toward the car and the exasperated and frantic thirteen-year-old.

"Now?"

"Now!" Dustin exclaims.

Allison is still standing on the footpath, her mouth hanging open slightly when Dustin opens the door and shouts at her, "Allison, get in the car!" Steve glances at her frantically as she hurries into the back seat.

"What's going on, Dustin?" Dustin doesn't reply, only telling Steve to go to his house. Allison's eyes meet Steve's in the rear-view mirror, "Harrington? Can someone please tell me what's going on!" Steve glances at Dustin beside him, then turns his eyes back to the road.

Great, she thought. I've been kidnapped by a thirteen-year-old shit-head.

It's gotten dark by the time Dustin has finished telling his story and they had nearly made it to his house. The car was silent once again, Allison sat in the back, her mouth open in disbelief at the story she had just heard. Both boys in the front had practically forgotten her existence in the back. Allison tries to tell them to let her out the car



when Steve talks over her. "Wait a sec, how big?" Steve asks, his eyes not leaving the road.

Dustin pulls his fingers apart about an inch, "It was this big, now it's this big." He uses his hands to measure about a foot.

"I swear to god man, it's just some little lizard."

Dustin huffs in annoyance before responding, "It's not a lizard!"

"How do you know?" Steve asks, his eyes glancing at Dustin quickly.

"How do I know it's not a lizard?" Dustin asks in disbelief.

"Yeah, how do you know it's not just a lizard!"

"Because its face opened up and it ate my cat!"

Steve huffs and shrugs his shoulder like the argument they had just made perfect sense.

"Stop the car right now."

Both boys jump slightly at the angry voice of the brunette in the back seat they had both forgotten about. Steve meets her eyes in the mirror and finds a feral animal on his back-seat; not that he'd ever say that out loud, comparing a female to an animal of any sort didn't seem like a smart plan. "No. Just, can you be quiet for a minute? We kinda have a crisis here." Steve winces at the kid's words, he doesn't need to look back to know Allison's ears just started steaming.

"You hijacked me, you little shit-head! So, if you aren't going to let me out of this car like right now, you better start talking. And if you could make it something other than the total nonsense you've been spouting for the entirety of this car trip, that would really benefit you!"

Allison can see Steve's shoulders climb higher until they touch his ears as she shouts, and Dustin turns back to look at her an exasperated look on his young face. "You wouldn't be able to comprehend the enormity of what we're discussing, Alli. Trust me when I say you're better thinking this is nonsense." Dustin says sagely

earning an eye roll from the girl in the back seat.

"You're saying a lizard ate your cat, Dweeb. It's not the complexity of the phrase that's confusing me, a senior with a 4.3 GPA."

"It's not a lizard!" they shout in unison and Allison puts her hands up in surrender. "Okay, it's not a lizard. What is it?"

"Wait, you've been skimming my notes and you have a 4.3 GPA? How did I not know this?"

Allison rolls her eyes again, Dustin telling Steve that it wasn't pertinent to the current problem. They pull up to the Henderson house and neither of them has yet to answer a single question she'd asked. The boys glance at each other, both with anxious looks before exiting the car and heading toward the boot. Allison huffs her hands slapping her thighs in frustration before she exits the car.

"Why was I forced into the car if no one is going to tell me what's going on?" Steve swings a bat filled with nails out from the boot and Allison steps back with a yell. "Harrington, what the Hell, you dipshit!"

He glares at her and she glares back, both nearing the end of their rope. "Why is she here, Henderson?" His question was answered when a blond boy jumped down the stairs of the house with familiar blue eyes.

"Daniel? What are you doing here? You told Mom you were staying at the Sinclair's house!" Allison yelled, pulling the boy to her side.

"I brought you with us because, of Daniel. Now you both need to leave." Dustin turned with Steve and they walked around to a cellar door. Leaving a stunned Allison and concerned Daniel behind.

"Daniel, what is going on?" Allison asks in frustration, squeezing her brother's shoulder.

"Lucas was being lame and just wanted to hang out with Max, so I biked back to his house to get my stuff when I heard Dustin on the walkie. He was screaming 'code red! code red!' I rushed over here, and he told me he found Dart and... Alli, he was like the size of a

dog! Dart the tiny little lizard from yesterday!"

Allison remembered Daniel telling her all about the creature Dustin had brought to school yesterday and Daniel admitting he was glad it ran away, Will didn't like it and Daniel thought it was gross and slimy.

Around the corner of the house, Steve poked the cellar door with his bat, "I don't hear shit."

Dustin stood back slightly and gestured towards the door, "He's in there." Steve hit's the door again with the baseball bat then turns his flashlight on Dustin's face.

"Alright, listen, kid, if this is some sort of Halloween prank, your dead, alright."

Steve's face serious as Dustin promises it's not a prank. He pulls the light away from Dustin's face and into the eyes of Allison who stood just behind. "Jesus!" they exclaim at the same time, Allison shielding her eyes and trying to blink away the white spots.

"We told you to leave, Edwards."

Allison steps forward her expression hardening as she glares at the two idiots before her. "I'm not leaving until I get some answers, I don't care if you think I can't or won't understand. Daniel told me about Dart yesterday and I'd like to know why he grew to be the size of a dog, *overnight*, just like you guys would."

Steve sighs and throws an exasperated look Dustin's way. Dustin shrugs and Steve's gaze returns to Allison, spotting the blond hair of her brother hidden behind her. "I will explain everything to you in a minute but for now will you please stand back, I don't want any of you to get hurt." Allison softens and steps back, finding Daniel had followed her, she places a hand on his shoulder protectively.

"Got a key for this thing?"

Steve opens the cellar doors, bat in hand and steps down, Dustin announcing he would stay upstairs in case *He* tries to escape. Allison and Daniel join Dustin at the opening, it's been a few minutes and

they still haven't heard anything. Allison doesn't know what Dart is but doesn't really like the idea of Steve going down there with nothing but his hair and a baseball bat full of nails.

"Harrington?" Allison asks hesitantly, He doesn't reply, and her heart starts to pound. "Steve?" She calls again. Suddenly light shines on their faces from underneath and they all jump back in surprise.

"Get down here," Steve calls, his voice as serious as Allison had ever heard it.

Allison instructs Daniel to stay above and she and Dustin make their way down, Allison pulling the younger boy behind her, just in case. Steve is standing in the middle of the room, his bat uplifted to display a yellow carcase of goo. Dustin pushes her out of the way slightly to get closer to the goo.

"Oh, shit."

He follows the end of the bat Steve had pointed toward the corner of the room. A giant hole had been tunnelled through the concrete and into the dirt.

"Oh, shit!"

Dustin squatted down with Steve as they tried to see where the tunnel led with the flashlight. "What in the Hell did that?" Allison whispered, both boys rising to glance at her.

"This is not good," Dustin muttered, staring at a concerned looking Steve.

"And it's called a Demogorgon, like from *Paradise Lost*?"

The four of them currently sat in the basement of the Edwards' house. Allison had told their mother that the boys were having a sleepover in the basement, which had now been converted into a den for Daniel and all his games and she would sleep down with them, so they didn't get too rowdy. Her mother agreed immediately and wandered off to the lounge telling them to let her know if they needed anything.

Allison and the boys had gone downstairs and under the cover of

getting snacks, she had done something she had never in her life thought she'd do; Allison Edwards snuck a boy into her home. Granted it was only Steve Harrington and she thought he was a bit of a shit-head, but the cliché wasn't lost on her. She imagined what the kids at school would think of this, according to Melinda half the school thought she had something to do with 'The Breakup' that had spread through the school like wildfire. They both filled their arms with snacks and drinks and made their way downstairs.

"Yeah, I guess. The *Dungeons and Dragons* guide is the most accurate representation of it." Dustin said thoughtfully, spying Daniel's manual, and finding the correct page before handing to the older girl. Steve leaned over Allison to read as well, He admitted early in the recount of last year's events he knew little, just that he had hit a giant ugly thing with a bat a bunch of times.

"He doesn't have 2 heads, they got that part wrong. His head opens up like a flower." Dustin pauses with a hand in the air before continuing "Maybe not a flower, but an Octopus Stinkhorn or something." He gestures in a circle around his face, "Point is, teeth... everywhere."

Steve frowns and glances up at Dustin, "What's an Octopus Stinkhorn?"

Allison waves for him to be quiet while she reads, "It's a mushroom." She murmurs.

"How could either of you possibly know that?"

Allison glares at the boy next to her. "Most people call them books, dip-shit." Steve rolls his eyes and they both continue reading.

She finishes and turns to Steve whose face is much closer than she'd realised, her nose brushing his jaw by accident. She pulls away awkwardly before looking up and finding his eyes already on her.

"You fought this thing?"

He nods a few times and uses his left hand to take the book from her, his right supporting his weight behind them and leaving their

shoulders barely touching. "Jesus Christ." She mutters running a hand through her now tangled hair.

"Jonathan and Nancy were there too, I was there that night for Jonathan. I was going to apologise for being such an asshole... It's a long story." He chuckles slightly and visibly swallows, Allison understands it's a painful memory and pats a hand on his raised knee in support. He smiles at her briefly before gently throwing the book into the pile of junk food.

"How did you beat it last time, maybe we can do the same thing?"

Daniel asks Dustin, pulling the older teens back to the conversation. "Eleven, she protected all of us. She's gone, she sacrificed herself to save us." Dustin spoke sadly, he pulled his cap off and ran a hand through his curls with a sigh.

"It's not like Hawkins Lab has any more experiments running around to save us from an entire world of monsters they won't tell anyone about either."

"Wait, Hawkins Lab?"

Dustin nods, his eyes focused on Allison with confusion. "Yeah, did I forget to mention them? Everything that happened was because of that Lab. They kept Eleven as a science experiment and she opened the gate to the Upside Down, they tried to cover up Will's and Nancy's friend Barb's disappearance. They practically tried to have us all killed to get Eleven back."

Allison and Daniel shared a look of horror, suddenly it made sense why Jonathan and Nancy had been acting weird yesterday. Allison swallowed turning her frightened gaze toward the teen beside her.

"What is it?" Steve asks glancing between the two of them.

"Our Dad, he works for Hawkins Lab, it's the reason we moved here," Daniel said quietly, staring at his sister in absolute shock.

"This can't be possible, Dad wouldn't hurt anyone! He couldn't have been a part of this." Allison tried to reassure her brother a deep furrow in her brow. "Yesterday Nancy and Jonathan had acted so

strangely when they found out about my Dad, I thought they just bought into the whole 'Russian spy' thing like everyone else." They sat in silence, the Edwards' in disbelief, Steve in worry, and Dustin in contemplation.

Allison glanced over at Dustin whose frown had deepened considerably as he thought. "Tomorrow, I say we try and draw Dart out. We'll go and buy as much meat as we can and lead him to a place away from everything, it's how Daniel and I got him in the cellar." Daniel nods in agreement.

"Once we've set up to catch Dart, I think Alli and Daniel should go talk to Mr Edwards, maybe you can gain some information, or he might be able to help. Hopper and Mrs Byers have been taking Will to the Lab every week since he came back, he says they are the good guys since pretty much everyone died when they tried to get Eleven back last year."

"Yeah, that's a no."

Dustin rolls his eyes at Steve who glared at the curly haired kid like he's grown a second head. "You've done enough, kid. Tomorrow we go to the station and we tell Hopper everything."

"You think I'm here with you because you were my first choice? Steve, I spent the entire day trying to get a hold of anyone! Hopper, Mike, Will, Lucas, Mrs Byers, Hell, even Nancy and Jonathan are M.I.A. We are the only ones around left to deal with this." Steve huffs in frustration, running a hand through his hair.

"If you want to leave, you don't have to be a part of this, Steve."

Steve scoffs, "I'm not gonna leave you to deal with this alone, shit-head." He rises from his spot on the floor beside Allison and wipes his hands on his jeans. "You shit-heads better get some sleep then, we're gonna need to get to the butchers early with the amount of meat we'll need." He sweeps a hand through his hair muttering, "Jesus, how is this my life?"

Allison rose to her feet with him quickly, pulling her pale pink sweater down nervously as she went. "Where are you going?" She

demanded in a shrill tone as Steve began to climb the stairs.

"Uh, home?"

Allison shakes her head and crosses her arms stubbornly. "No way in hell are you going off on your own, with that thing out there. We should stick together until it's safe." Allison didn't see the logic in separating, and if she was being honest she really didn't want Steve to leave them.

Steve shakes his head with a frown. "I'll be fine, and so will the three of you. I'll be back in like four hours." Allison takes a step towards him, her crystal blue eyes wide and pleading.

"Exactly, Steve it's four hours. Stay, and that way we know that you're safe and we can tackle this together. Please."

Steve stares at the girl before him, she was the nicest person he'd ever met while somehow still being sassy and full of ire. Ever since the party when Nancy had told Allison Barb was dead, the thought of her finding out about last year had been rolling around his head making him sick. And now it was happening again, and she was looking at him with genuine fear in her pretty eyes, the last thing he ever wanted to see in them. He wished he had somehow managed to keep her away from this.

He didn't like seeing her as anything but strong and annoying, so he nods in concession squeezing her tensed shoulder and hoping it will ease his friend. Allison relaxes with a sigh, her dimple showing as she smiles at him thankfully. Together they set the younger boys up for bed.

The boys fall asleep within moments, but Allison can't seem to calm down. This whole night had been insane and time in her own head wasn't helping to make any of it clearer. She sat up in her sleeping bag with a frustrated sigh and wiggled back against the wall before lifting her knees and wrapping her arms around them.

A part of her wished she had never gotten in that car, another part of her wished she hadn't pushed to get herself involved in all this. All of her wished Daniel wasn't involved. Allison couldn't believe that she



believed them, but somehow, she did. It was the most insane story she had ever heard but she couldn't doubt them, the horror in their eyes was real, what happened last year haunted them.

It explained so much about each of them and Allison almost couldn't believe she couldn't see the underlying trauma before. Mike was angry and standoffish all the time and it wasn't from the opening song of puberty. Will was reserved and shy, Dustin had said he had always been quiet but being in the Upside Down had made him more so. Dustin and Lucas had seen things no one in the world was equipped to deal with. Nancy had lost her best friend and with Jonathan had shared an experience that Allison couldn't even begin to comprehend, it was a story she would one day like to hear entirely from them both.

And Steve, Steve had been an asshole in the wrong place at the wrong time and had somehow become a hero in the story Dustin told. Steve had shaken his head at the title claiming to be nothing more than a guy with more luck than brains. But Allison thought he was a hero; he went back into that house and he saved both Nancy and Jonathan. She could see now the burden of that choice on his shoulders, moments when he wanted to be the coward but knowing he had no choice but to stand up and fight.

It bothered her that all these young people had been forced to endure something like this at the hands of a bunch of scientists. Which brought her to what had kept her mind racing, despite the insanity of the story it was her Father's role that bothered her most. What did her Father know about all this? Was he involved in the experiments on Eleven?

Richard had started taking business trips to Hawkins nearly a year ago, the date of his first trip was just a few weeks before Will's disappearance. It lined up perfectly and that bothered her, the man she thought she knew could very well be the reason Eleven and Barb were dead, and the reason Will's death had been faked.

Allison realised she hadn't actually seen her father since Sunday when they had gone to the lookout together. He had told her he would be busy with his new assignment, but she didn't realise that meant he would never be home. Allison never even thought to ask

when he came home at night, she had just assumed he was coming home when she was asleep, and leaving before she woke, but what if he wasn't even coming home?

What did her mother really know? Mary had always told them since they were little that Richard was a hero, a special scientist who helped the government to keep them safe. Was she covering for him or did she really think he was a hero?

A rustling from across the rooms breaks her out of her reverie and instantly she tenses. Sitting forward she can hear a quiet swish, the whisper growing in volume as it moved steadily toward her. Allison is about to rise when a body slides down the wall next to hers.

"Couldn't sleep either?"

Allison relaxes and lets out a shaky breath, admitting that he had frightened her. "I would say get used to it, but you never do. You forget for a while, but it always comes back." His hand found hers in the dark and clutches it in support, Allison squeezes lightly.

"What were you thinking about, Edwards?" Steve queries in a whisper, his mouth so close to her ear, in an effort not to wake the boys, Allison swears she can feel his words. Of all the terrible things that had happened, Allison decided she was glad it was Steve holding her hand in the dark. Somehow in the short time, they had known each other she had become comfortable in his presence, maybe it was seeing him at his most vulnerable or maybe it was knowing he had her back with Billy and the others, but he kept her steady and she thought she might need that tomorrow.

"I was thinking that out of everything I've learned tonight, the thing that bothers me most is that I have lived my entire life thinking my Father was a hero, but I truly have no idea who my Dad really is. Like what if he's involved in all this? Am I supposed to, I don't know, shrug it off and go for a run with him? What do I tell my Mom?"

Allison can feel her throat close and begs herself not to cry in front of Steve Harrington. "I'm sorry, Allison." He's silent for a moment before murmuring again "I can't tell you whether your Dad is good or not, but I can tell you that I'm sure he loves you and he's doing what he

thinks is best." He states, soothing her as his thumb runs up and down the back of her hand. "And don't tell your Mom anything yet, let's see where your Dad fits into all this first."

Allison nods in agreement, desperate to think of anything other than her Father. Settling against the wall again she nudges her shoulder against Steve's. "I think I've only ever heard you call me 'Allison' once before, it's troubling." He chuckles, continuing to hold her hand gently between them.

"Why is it troubling?"

Allison bites her bottom lip before responding, humour lining her voice, "because it means we're like officially friends." She pauses with a quiet laugh, listening to his hair shifting against the wall when he turns his head toward her.

"I'm glad we're friends, Wastoid."

He chuckles again and nudges her back. Allison rests her head against the wall a small smile playing on her face at his laugh, she didn't hear him laugh very often, she likes it. "I'm glad too."

A comfortable silence falls between them and Allison feels herself dozing off when Steve speaks again. "How come you were at Nancy's house today?" Allison shrugs, knowing now that Nancy hadn't stood her up didn't make her feel better about the situation.

"Nancy left a note in my locker on Thursday asking me to meet her at her house. I thought she had like set me up or something, especially after how weird she was when she found out about my Dad." Allison sighed with a shake of her head. "What if Nancy and Jonathan think I'm involved in all this? Maybe that's why she invited me over." Allison groaned, pushing her hands through her hair roughly. "God, every time I think about them I just see the horrified looks they gave me, I can't stand the thought of them thinking I knew about all this."

Steve sat forward running his hands through his hair with a sigh of his own. "I don't know what Nance was thinking, but there is no way she thought you were involved in all this. More likely she was gonna tell you about it. Which is a sure-fire way to get us all killed."

"What do you mean?"

"After everything last year, people at the Lab threatened us all. Told us if we ever tried to go public, they would kill us and our families before we could. Nancy has been wanting to tell Barb's parents for a while, but I didn't want to risk it." He paused, wincing slightly. "I sound like a dick." Steve finished with a huff.

Shaking her head, Allison tries to reassure the teen beside her. "You aren't a dick for wanting to protect yourself and Nancy. I'm sorry you've had to go through all this." She pauses a moment, patting his shoulder briefly before dropping her hand back into her lap. "And for what it's worth, I'm sorry about you and Nancy, Steve. I hope you can work it out."

"Yeah, me too."

"Get some sleep, Edwards, I'll stay with you." He replies leaning back and brushing her shoulder against his. Allison accepts she isn't going to get anything else from him tonight and pushes herself back down, adjusting her pillow under her head and pulling her knees up to her chest. Sleep overcomes her quickly while the boy beside her watches over the darkroom, too deep in his own thoughts to ever consider sleep.

## 9. Saturday II

Helloooooo again everyone! can you believe 30 people have followed this story and 15 people have liked it!? Thank you to each and every one of you, it means the world that you are enjoying this and that you like Allison. I like to refer to her as my little 80's Gilmore on an acid trip lol.

We are about half way now and I'm so excited to show you what I have planned for my little Allison and all the others in the Stranger Things world. Enjoy! let me know what you think, especially of the sappy little moment in the middle... I'm so unsure about it but I also love it and AHH IDK.

Miaow0 - Hayley Kiyoko and Cardi B are my life right now. Also I did my first beep test in grade 5 and I swear to god I have PTSD

Guest - I'm so happy you are enjoying the story! I'm glad to see my late nights reading 80's nostalgia pieces is showing lol.

*Hey man, everywhere you roam  
Your demons come and go  
But at least you're not alone, yeah*

*I'm searching for a remedy.*

*Remedy - Thirty seconds to Mars.*

### Saturday

Allison woke abruptly to the sounds of her Mother banging around the kitchen. She sighed in relief at her Mother's loud cooking, glancing at the boy who was meant to wake them all up at dawn. He sat slumped against the wall beside her, his hair somehow still perfect. Arms crossed over his chest and legs straight, he looked downright uncomfortable. His mouth was open slightly and he snored a little, Allison rolled her eyes with a tired smile, it was the lack of sleep that made her brain think he was adorable.

Rising with a stretch, she silently woke the boys and sent them

upstairs to distract Mary and have breakfast. It wasn't until she had packed all the sleeping bags away and finished tidying up that she woke Steve, kicking the bottom of his shoe with a grin.

He straightened instantly, confused about his location before his eyes found Allison and he relaxed. "I fell asleep." He muttered running his hands over his face with a sniff.

"Big time. I almost felt bad for waking you, but you were snoring so freaking loud I was worried my Mom would venture down." She smirked, earning a tired glare from the messy-haired boy. "It's still early, we can go get what we need and still have the time to see my Dad." Allison finished with a smile. She handed him a bottle of water from last night and jabbed her thumb in the direction of the stairs. "I'm gonna go upstairs and you are gonna sneak out and then go and knock on the door, I'm telling my Mom we're all going to the movies." He nods getting to his feet and stretching his hands over his head.

The plan had gone well, not without the small hiccup of Allison's Mom having a cataclysmic reaction to meeting the previously faceless Steve. Allison gathered that her mother had approved of the attached face because she had bumbled like a swooning teenager the second Steve had turned on the charm.

Steve was still smirking at the reaction he had received from Allison's Mother. He had heard her hesitation through the heavy front door to send her children off to a stranger but was herding them out the door within minutes after opening it.

Meanwhile, Allison's blush still hadn't cooled from the humiliation she had suffered at the hands of her Mother. On top of the giggling schoolgirl routine, Mary Edwards had made some comments to her daughter about the shape of her friend's rear end that she just didn't have the mental compacity to deal with today. Allison just hoped to god that Steve hadn't heard; his ego and her embarrassment were already sky high.

The four of them had gathered chunks of meat filling two buckets and Dustin picked the spot, instructing Steve to leave his car by the abandoned train tracks, they exited the car and began unloading. Daniel and Allison went to scout while Dustin and Steve walked a

few yards back, chatting quietly and tossing meat as they went.

Whatever they were talking about had Dustin enraptured and Allison desperately wanted to hear what her Chemistry partner had to say. She shook her head at her own invasive thoughts, her journalistic tendencies almost getting the better of her. Allison turned her attention to her brother instead, who looked ahead, wearily, hoping to avoid Dart at any cost.

"How's it going over there, Kiddo?" Allison asks quietly, slowing to match Daniel's pace. He jumped in surprise at her voice, forgetting momentarily that she had been walking a few steps ahead.

"I hate these woods. They really freak me out."

Allison nods in understanding, they made her uncomfortable too, she couldn't believe when she had first arrived in Hawkins, she had admired the beauty of the trees. They reminded her of her friends now and the pain they had suffered for a year at the hands of her Fathers Lab.

"Once this is done, I'm taking you home to Mom, okay kid? We go talk to Dad and then we go. You are way too young to be dealing with this shit, Hell, I'm too young to be dealing with it." She sighs, her fingers untangling the ends of her hair. The last thing on her mind had been to run a brush through her hair while she waited for Steve to knock earlier.

"I don't want to leave Dustin and Steve to deal with this alone, Alli. I say we talk to Dad and if he doesn't have any answers we keep helping them until we can find the Police Chief. Dustin said Chief Hopper is a good man if we can find him maybe we can all go home, Steve and Dustin too."

The look of determination on Daniel's face had Allison sighing again, she knew he was right; they couldn't leave Dustin and Steve to handle this alone. "Alright, it's a deal, Kid. Just be careful okay? I want you to stick with me unless I say otherwise." Daniel nods, a small smile pulling at his mouth.

The pair let silence fall between them, the sounds of the gravel and

fallen leaves underneath their feet and the rustling of trees filling their ears. Allison could almost trick herself into believing it was peaceful.

"Is it bad that despite how terrifying this all is, I kinda feel like a total badass? Like a *Ghostbuster* or something."

Allison laughs loud enough to draw the attention of the boys behind her momentarily. Steve thinks it sounds like bells, he also thinks he might be sleep deprived because his thoughts had gotten weird in the last hour.

Wrapping an arm around her little brother, Allison squeezes, laughing again when Daniel squirms. "Such a badass, Dweeb." He huffs in annoyance, breaking away from her with his tongue stuck out defiantly. He struts ahead of her, arms swinging as he returns to his lookout duty. Lingering back, Allison lets the badass be.

They have been walking for fifteen minutes or so when Allison hears a disbelieving Steve talking to Dustin over the crunching of leaves under her tennis shoes. "No, no, no, no, like a sexual electricity."

"Oh!"

"You feel that," Steve continues, much to Allison's mortification. "And then you make your move." She hears Dustin ask if that's when he should kiss her, and Steve corrects him quickly with what could be the worst advice on dating she had ever heard. Some girls want you to be aggressive like a lion... At that moment she wished the leaves crunched louder, she went to speed up but suddenly Dustin's quiet voice piqued her interest again.

"What type was Nancy?"

"Nancy's different. She's different than the other girls." Allison's heart broke a little for her friend. She didn't know what her friend was like last year but the boy she had come to know, he didn't deserve the blame Nancy had thrust upon them.

"Yeah, she seems pretty special, I guess."

"Yeah, yeah, she is."



Allison wanted to turn around and squeeze him as tight as she could, the only thing that held her back is her meekness for kinda accidentally snooping and the fact that he was currently playing big brother to Dustin and a consoling hug would do little for his credibility as a high school heart-breaker.

"What about Alli, she's not like any girl I've ever met. Is she different like Nancy?" Allison nearly choked on the crisp air upon hearing the younger boy's query, her steps faltering as she blushed bright red. She should have known her snooping would put her in an uncomfortable position. Nevertheless, she strained her ears to hear Steve's response, curious to know what her friend thought of her.

"Edwards isn't special like Nancy." Allison's face fell at his words, actively trying not to show any physical reaction she kept walking, her eyes found Daniel, who peeked back with a grin. She waved and smiled, pretending she hadn't just been gutted by her friend. It surprised her that Steve's words had cut her so deep, she supposed after the last few days he would have a strong opinion of her. She certainly held a positive opinion of him. "How do I explain this... Nance is like Spring, yeah? Everything about her is so..."

"Perfect?" Dustin surmised.

She could imagine Steve nodding in agreement, his hair bobbing in synchronicity. "Yeah. You know in Spring it's always sunny, but not too sunny, and the air always smells sweet, like... flowers and all the colours are bright and pink? That's Nancy." Steve sighs deeply before continuing, "Allison is like Fall, completely opposite to Nance."

"But Alli is nice like Nancy, and I've seen her wear pink plenty of times, she wore pink last night!" Dustin argues, viewing the assessment as an insult to his friend's older sister. He hated Fall, it always meant Summer was over, which meant back to school. Dustin liked Alli, Daniel had told him that she knew a lot about movies and music, and she had taken the time to learn about D&D because it meant so much to him, he thought that was cool.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, Allison is nice, but in a... softer way. Allison is kind and funny and a little strange in a way that's comfortable, warm maybe. I don't know, I'm not explaining this right."

"No, I get what you're saying. Fall has comfortable clothes, and the trees always look really nice, orange and yellow, like her top today! The weather is always perfect in Fall."

"Exactly, perfect. In a different way." Steve says a little gruffly, realising he was having an incredibly meaningful conversation with a thirteen-year-old. He stares ahead at the girl in question, her dark hair fluttering behind her as she walks, her head down and her arms crossed over her yellow sweater. He had surprised himself with his assessment but couldn't find fault in it. Allison had become important to him over the last few days. They are both quiet for a few moments before Dustin speaks again.

"You know, now that I think about it, Fall might be my favourite season."

"Yeah, mine too."

They continue talking about the girl Dustin likes, but Allison barely hears over the pumping of her heart in her ears. The things Steve had said about her were the nicest things she had ever heard. Tears formed in her eyes as she ran the words over in her head. He called her perfect.

No one had ever called her perfect before. She couldn't wrap her mind around how nice it felt hearing those words from her friend's mouth. Allison wanted to dissect every part of his speech, study it and find the hidden meanings within, kicking herself for the intelligent part of her brain reminding her this wasn't the time. *If you make it out alive*, she rolled her eyes at her own black thoughts, *you can sift through each and every vowel*.

Allison found herself much closer to the boys as she processed what she had heard, Steve's voice suddenly much louder than before, frightened her back into reality. "Faberge,"

"What?"

Allison can feel Steve's eyes on her back like he worried she might be too close to say what he's about to say, he was completely right in his worry. "It's *Faberge Organics*. Use the shampoo and the conditioner,

and when the hair is damp — it's not wet, OK? When it's damp — do four puffs of the *Farrah Fawcett* spray."

"*Farrah Fawcett* spray?" Dustin says, humour lining his voice.

"Yeah *Farrah Fawcett*, "You tell anyone I told you that, and your ass is grass, your dead, Henderson, you understand that?"

They had stopped walking and Allison stopped as well, watching Steve point a threatening finger at the pre-teen, meat filling his hand. He smiles slightly muttering an 'okay' when Dustin promises not to tell, before throwing the meat chunks on the ground and turning to keep walking, stopping abruptly when he sees a smirking Allison a few steps ahead.

"Oh, shit," Dustin mutters glancing between the teens with wide eyes. Allison's eyes sparkle with glee as she opens her mouth to shamelessly pick on the perfect-haired boy for threatening a child. Dustin cuts her off before she can get a word in. "I saw Allison and her Mom staring at your butt when we were leaving this morning!"

Steve's eyebrow rises toward the open-mouthed girl, a blush colouring her cheeks adorably. "I was not staring at his ass, Dustin! Why would you... uh, no!" Allison huffs in embarrassment, Steve's smirk growing on his face. "Stop, smirking at me like that Harrington! I swear this is totally not fair, my Mom was being gross! That's not my fault."

Steve and Dustin glance at each other before bursting into laughter. "Okay, but I just have to ask— did you like the view?" Allison groans, whirling away quickly and surging to catch up to her brother. She was going to kill her Mother when she got home, whether she enjoyed the view or not.

An old junkyard came into view not too long after, adjusting the playful mood the four had shared. Old cars and rusty junk sat in the open field, the grass green and slowly growing over the junk. Daniel was already searching the space for usable tools while Dustin, Allison, and Steve took in the grassy area. It was the perfect spot, far enough away from civilisation and with a suitable place to hide in the form of a rusted-out bus.

"Oh, yeah. Yeah, this will do." Steve remarks, removing his ray bans that had materialised in the last five minutes, and walking into the mess. "This will do just fine. Good call, dude." Dustin grins at Steve, blushing slightly. Allison steps in front of the young kid, flicking the brim of his hat with a chuckle.

Walking to the middle of the field, she watches her Brother circle the rusty bus with a small smile, pushing the doors open eventually and shimmying inside when they didn't open fully. "Careful, Kid! That's like *Rust Monster* city!" Daniel's head popped out from the broken door, so she could see him roll his eyes before he got to work on fixing the entrance to the bus.

"Did you just make a D&D reference? Why don't girls my age know about this stuff! Bullshit." Dustin exclaims dumping the last of the meat in a pile next to Allison. She chuckles, opening her mouth to reply when they hear a yell from a few meters away and turn to the noise.

"I said medium-rare!" Lucas shouts waving his arm over his bandana covered head with a grin. A girl walks next to him in a blue hoodie and curly red hair. Her arms are crossed defensively but a small smile lights up her face when she finds Dustin.

"Who's that?"

It didn't take a genius to figure out that was Dustin's mystery girl from the sad look on his young face. Even Steve put the clues together quickly and left well enough alone, stepping away from the pre-teen and moving toward the bus, his yellow meat gloves dropping to the grass as he went. Allison, putting two and two together assumed this was the parties elusive MADMAX and placed a hand on Dustin's shoulder in support; young love was totally a bitch.

"You told her? Dustin exclaims with a shake of his head, kneeling behind the long-dead red car a few meters from the bus that Steve, Daniel, and Max were currently turning into a fortress. Allison stood over Lucas' shoulder, arms crossed over her chest and her foot tapping in frustration at the boys' ridiculous argument.

"So what?"

"So what?" Dustin mimics in disbelief.

"You wanted to tell her too!"

"Yeah, but I didn't! We all agreed not to tell her and to look for Dart." Dustin says with an air of superiority. It was obvious to Allison that the two boys were fighting more over Max than whole telling Max thing. Her patience was running thin with the two, who were letting the day slip by whilst they bickered.

"You told Daniel and Alli," Lucas replies smugly, seeming to think he has the trump card but Dustin snorts, readjusting the cap on his head. Allison groans, stomping away in frustration. A glance upward revealed time was sliding away; the sun sat low in the west. It would begin to set soon, and Allison and Daniel still had the task of visiting their Father.

A sudden clang of metal hitting metal makes her jump. Whipping around, Allison finds Steve yelling at the two boys' who looked to have found some common ground. "Hey, Dickheads! How come the only one helping me is this random girl?" He gestures toward Max who was currently stacking metal against the bus while Daniel worked inside, trying to open the emergency hatch. "We lose light in forty minutes, let's go. Let's go I said!"

They both follow an annoyed looking Steve with a cacophony of insults and swears directed at the older boy. Allison rolls her eyes, dragging a few scrap pieces over to Max with a polite smile. The girl smiles back, pushing her long hair behind her ear. "Hey, your Max, right? I'm Allison."

"I know, the boys talk about you all the time. They think you're really cool." She replies, taking a sheet of scrap metal from Allison's hand and throwing it onto her pile with a loud bang. "My ass-hole step-brother may have mentioned you as well."

Allison frowns at the girl in confusion resulting in another smile from the redhead. "Billy is my step-brother." Her brow crinkles in sympathy and the girl chuckles. "Yeah," Max sighs, brushing her hands on her blue jeans.

"I feel anything he said about me probably wasn't good, I kinda yelled at him a couple days ago." Allison winced. She couldn't imagine the sort of brother Billy Hargrove would be; her money was on a bad one.

"He probably deserved it. Our parents make him take me home from school sometimes and he saw you in the parking lot on Thursday, said you were like a really good runner and a bit of a bitch." Max chuckled, her attention drawn to Steve and the two boys who were currently arguing about something ridiculous if Steve's face was any indication.

Allison couldn't disagree with Billy's assessment. At least he had said something nice first, she mused. "Boys are so stupid," Max mutters returning to her work with a sigh. Allison spots Lucas and Dustin fighting over a scrap piece and laughs loudly enough for them to notice the two girls watching them. Max grins at the older girl, who throws her remaining piece of junk into the pile.

"Kid, you have no idea."

The sun had begun to set, leaving a red and pink haze in its wake by the time Steve had deemed the project complete. Allison stood atop the bus with a thankful sigh, wiping her brow and enjoying the beginning of the cool night. Daniel had done an excellent job turning the bus into a fortress and with some help and an old ladder, Max had managed to open the safety hatch creating a hideout for Lucas and his binoculars with old tires and metal.

"You kinda look like a superhero who just saved the day."

Allison's eyes find Steve standing below her, his arms crossed and a smirk on his face. The ray-bans had been abandoned long ago, but he still squinted slightly against the pink of the sun. Allison grinned, fluffing her hair in the wind, and resting her hands on her hips. "Call me *Zatanna*! You know I always wanted to be a magician."

"And she knows comics! Seriously why aren't girls our age cool like you?" Dustin shouts from within the bus.

"They are! Your just too busy complaining at them, Dweeb." Allison

responds, thinking next Halloween she might find herself in *Zatanna's* iconic fishnets and top hat. "Do you think Bostonians will be accepting of a girl walking around in her underwear, a blazer, and a pair of fishnets? I'm gonna do it for Halloween next year. Who knows! Maybe I'll love it so much I'll run away to become a travelling magician or clairvoyant or something, or maybe I'll just swear off pants! The possibilities are endless!"

Steve rolls his eyes at her antics and gestures her to come down, disposing of the can of fuel he had created a trap with. Grabbing onto the grating they had covered the windows with, Allison leapt over the tires and landed on one of the old cylinders with ease. "Geez, Edwards! Don't do that." Steve exclaimed, offering her a hand down. He had rushed forward in panic at the sight of her blind jump off the bus.

"It's barely a drop, Harrington," Allison responds with a smirk, taking his offered hand and hopping down to the soft grass with ease. "Besides you'd catch me, right?" She jokes squeezing his hand lightly before releasing.

Steve huffs following when she steps away from the bus and the middle schoolers inside. Jumping up on the boot of the red car she had witnessed Dustin and Lucas argue behind earlier, Allison raised a brow at her friend who stood in front of her his arms crossed again. The annoyance at Allison's previous stunt long forgotten as concern over what could happen tonight rises.

"Dan and I better motor if we have any hope of making it to the Lab before it closes if it even closes. I don't know, maybe it's always open which would explain why my Dad's never home." Allison muses, tapping a finger on her chin thoughtfully.

Steve doesn't hear much of what she had said his focus on the fact that he hates they were separating, especially this close to dark with some weird Demogorgon/Dog/Lizard thing on the loose. This instinct that he had to protect people he cared about included her now, his earlier revelation with Dustin notwithstanding. Allison was his friend and she knew him well enough to read his face and see the thoughts rushing through his head.

"This is going to work, Harrington. Whatever is out there will fall for this trap and we will meet back up at my house, all of us safe and maybe with some answers. Don't worry about me, worry about you and those kids." Allison reassured her hand gripping the arm of his grey jacket tightly.

"Just... be careful okay?"

"When am I not?" She replied, mock offended.

Steve's mouth ticked up slightly, his eyes darting between her and the bus. "I'll go get Daniel," Steve mutters, running a hand through his hair before dropping both hands to his hips. Despite his words, he doesn't move right away. His eyes roam Allison's face, which had dropped into a confused frown once more. Eventually, he sighed and jogging over to the bus and grabbed Daniel.

Allison can see them talking from where she sits, she sees Steve smile slightly, much like he did with Dustin earlier before ruffling his sandy hair. The pair walks over to Allison who jumps off the back of the car and claps her dirty hands against her thighs.

"Lucas gave me his walkie, so we can communicate in case anything goes wrong. Dustin said the Lab is about 10 minutes away." Daniel tells her, stuffing the large object into his backpack before passing it off to her. "You get to play pack mule." He continues with a cheeky grin.

"Thank you so much, ass."

"Nope, the ass would be you, sweet sister... get it cause ass is another name for a mule."

"I got it, you absolute Wastoid," Allison replies with a huffed laugh, pushing Daniel toward the tracks. Shouldering the bag, Allison turns to her concerned friend with a reassuring smile. "I'll see you soon." She reminds her friend, gripping his arm one last time before stepping back to join her brother.

"See you soon," Steve repeated, his face still drowning in apprehension, his dark eyes expressive as always, lines on his



forehead deepening with each step the Edwards siblings took. Allison turns back just before the trees engulf her spotting Steve with his hands on his face. He shakes his head once and heads into the bus, tapping a covered window as he goes.

## 10. Saturday II Part 2

Well, hello! It's been a crazy few days hasn't it? Brooklyn Nine-Nine was cancelled and uncanceled, Lucifer was cancelled, Eurovision did a thing where they robbed Australia and I will hear nothing more on that subject, Childish Gambino changed the world and reiterated his status as the perfect human, and well a president far, far away is resolute on that plan to end the world. So yeah, I've gone grey.

Anyway, enjoy part 2 of Saturday II! this might be my last update until June because life is meaningless but I must pay taxes. Thank you for sticking with me so far, as always let me know what you think.

SilverNightmares: I was anxious writing it tbh! It was a hard decision to have Alison and Daniel separate from the others but the way I see it at this point they thought it was only Dart and they were kinda going in a different direction than the trap. from a plot perspective I really didn't want to have them just slotting into the original story, I've done my best to minimise it so they feel more genuine with their own problems and solutions.

Miaow0: Thanks! I usually update what is every second Sunday here in Australia, I am taking a small break this month and I'll be back in June, I'm a chapter ahead so I kinda wanna get back to being 3 ahead... just gotta find some time. Thank you for the support :)

*Take a trip into my garden  
I've got so much to show  
The fountains and the water  
Are begging just to know*

*Bloom - Troye Sivan*

The Byers house was small but homey, however, many monsters had tried to haunt it. Allison had no real memory of arriving at the family home, her last coherent thought before she was being pushed into Mrs Byers car had been an urge to run back into the infested lab to

find her Father. That was fourteen minutes ago; it felt longer to her, somehow it was only fourteen minutes. At least that's what her watch had blinked at her from her wrist as she stared at her lap.

They had left him there. He had demanded it, but she barely put up a fight. She had been scared and believed him when he said he would be right behind her. He was trapped in that lab with those things that had killed Bob and Allison honestly didn't know if he was alive or dead. But she couldn't think about that, couldn't have those thoughts when it seemed the world was coming down around her ears. Allison pushed them away and excused herself from the silent kitchen where the others sat waiting- except for Mrs Byers who had escaped to her room for solace.

The cool air brushed her skin the moment the flywire door swung open, allowing her into the still night. Carefully, Allison set herself onto one of the many chairs that lined the porch avoiding the white love seat. It was the least of her worries right now, but Allison didn't want to add to Joyce's troubles by soaking her ivory furniture in blood.

Her quiet moment lasted seconds when the silent night was interrupted by the sound of tires crushing gravel and Chief Hopper rolled to a stop, Jonathan, and Nancy only seconds behind. A sigh of relief escaped her lips when she saw the passenger door open and Steve jumped out followed quickly by Dustin, Lucas, and Max. They were all dirty but thankfully unscathed. Allison could see the fatigue that traced each of their faces even from several feet away, somehow, they were safe, it settled her frazzled mind if only for a moment.

"Alli! Are you okay? You didn't use the walkie." Dustin asks when he sees her descend the step to shuffle to the car gingerly. His eyes looked like they were set to fall from his face as he took her in, she thought it was a fair reaction; Allison felt like her bottom half looked like *Carrie* after the prom.

She had spent the entire day with her heart in her throat doing manual labour, no she wasn't okay. She was sore and her small but pesky injury from the lab wasn't helping matters. "Yeah, Squirt just a little bruised. You guys alright?" Allison replies, placing a hand on the younger kid's shoulder in support and squeezing briefly. "We

didn't really have time to use it, honestly."

"We're all okay just tired. I'm gonna go inside and see the others, we have to figure out how to defeat this thing before it's too late." Dustin gestures to the door with a deep frown before waving Steve over who had been watching the pair longingly but had found himself stuck in a conversation with the Chief. "Steve, you need to help Allison off her ankle, she's sprained it."

Hopper watches the girl with a disapproving look, encouraging Steve with a nod of his head. Gaping at the curly haired boy, Allison turns as he walks toward the house. "How did you know I sprained my ankle?" Steve had stepped up behind her and placed his hands gingerly on her upper arms while she stared at the boy dumbfounded.

"It's my job to know when a party member is injured, Alli. You're lucky I've deemed you important enough for a healer or I would have left you behind, travellers with injuries tend to be dead weight." He replied smugly before turning to the house, Lucas and Max following behind him.

"Hopper told him." Steve sighed in exasperation, guiding his friend to the step, and helping her sit. "Is this yours?" He asked worriedly, taking in the blood that stained the left leg of her jeans and the knee of her right. Allison shook her head and watched as Steve knelt before her, rolling up the hem of her jeans carefully avoiding the still sticky blood before removing her now crimson tennis shoe and rolling down her stained white sock. "Has anyone looked at this yet?" He frowns down at her ankle, his finger brushing against the rapidly burgeoning swelling, strands of dark hair falling into his face.

"No, we only got here a couple of minutes ago." Two minutes ago. His fingers press into the flesh below her ankle and Allison hisses in pain, attempting to pull her foot from Steve's grasp in reaction. He mumbles an apology but continues to prod, earning a cacophony of swears and curses from the pretty brunette.

A towel is waved in her face, surprising Allison. Her eyes meet a concerned looking Jonathan who holds the tea-towel out to her. "You have some blood on your face." Is all he says before stepping away. Steve beats Allison to the towel and raises it to her face gently.

"I can do it." She snaps, taking the towel from an understanding Steve. Allison scrubs her face ruthlessly, her breath quickening with every swipe. She feels Steve's hand squeezing her shoulder in support but refuses to stop scrubbing her face with the damp towel until he grabs her hands within his own.

"Hey, hey, hey! It's gone, it's gone, I promise." Steve spoke gently, still holding her hands that squeeze the towel tightly. He watches as her blue eyes fill with tears and he swallows painfully, the hurt and terror he finds within them stuns him. Whatever happened to her in that lab traumatized her in a way he didn't think he would ever fully understand. As quickly as her fear had surfaced it was gone again, leaving the fierce expression he had grown familiar with these last few days. "It's okay to be scared, Alli." He reassures, "We're all like completely terrified."

Allison stares into his dark eyes, always so open and expressive and sighs, relinquishing her grip on the towel to him. She can see a few spots of blood on its clean surface and looks back to Steve's face quickly, trying to calm herself. "You don't act terrified. Hell, Dustin is cracking jokes like it's any other day." She sighs again, "Great now I'm jealous of a thirteen-year old's resolve; gag me." The corner of Steve's lips turns up slightly, but he nods in understanding, wiping her left cheek once- twice, before dropping the towel beside her and returning to her injured ankle.

Allison stares at her blood covered leg while Steve continues his ministrations, soothingly reassuring her as he does. The blood drying into her favourite jeans doesn't cause the beginnings of another panic attack and at that moment she's thankful- even when the lifeless eyes that had met her own when she fell flashed in her mind. Allison doesn't know if that's strength or trauma.

"It's pretty bad, Edwards. I'm afraid your running career is gonna take a hit for a few days. Let's get you inside and we'll get something cold to reduce the swelling." He begins righting her sock, "You're lucky a life as a Basketball player has prepared me for this moment." Steve pats her dry leg with an apologetic smile, collecting her shoe before rising with a low grunt. Okay so not as small an injury as she'd hoped but she knew she would manage.

"I'm sorry I snapped at you, Harrington."

"It doesn't matter. How'd this happen anyway? Hopper wasn't too forthcoming on the details, just said you'd hurt yourself." Steve queries, offering her both his hands and pulling her to her feet when she accepted them.

"Let's just... get this planning stuff out of the way and then I'll tell ya the whole story, I want to hear about your night as well." Allison shifted, her exhausted sigh turning into a squeak of surprise when Steve wrapped an arm around her waist and lifted her up the step to avoid any weight on her injured ankle.

Allison turned her head over Steve's shoulder as he helped her through the door and found Nancy and Jonathan watching them with a reserved gaze. She hadn't realised they were still outside and Allison turned away quickly, embarrassed, and sure her friends still thought she was evil from the hard masks they both wore.

"Can one of you shits get something from the freezer for Edwards' ankle?" Steve orders as he enters the kitchen, his arm still thrown around a grimacing Allison's waist who had mumbled to the teen several times already that she was more than capable of walking on her own.

Gripping onto his arm tightly as he lowers her into the seat Lucas had just vacated, Allison grunts with the effort to keep her weight off her left leg, her right leg strained. Finally seated she sighs in relief only to shout as a cold bag of peas presses directly into her skin.

"Grab that towel from over there." Lucas hands the cream tea-towel to Steve who wraps the peas before lifting her leg onto the table, so her ankle was raised and gently placing the peas down.

"Is that like really necessary? Let's leave the theatrics to the drama department, shall we?" Allison huffs trying to remove her leg from the table only to feel Steve's firm hand on her calf.

"Trust me, you want to keep it elevated." Was all he said his hand moving from her calf down to keep light pressure on the peas on her ankle. She felt foolish but realised no one was paying any attention,

Nancy and Jonathan were still outside and Hopper and Mrs Byers were nowhere to be seen. The kids that surrounded her each looked tired and deep in thought at their next move. They were too young for this shit, she had been jealous of Dustin's resolve a few minutes before but now she just felt sorry for him and the others. They were children and Allison felt her anger rise at the idea that this secret was being carried by a bunch of middle-schoolers who didn't deserve anything but the chance to enjoy their childhoods.

"Did you guys know that Bob was the original founder of Hawkins A.V.?" Mike speaks quietly having made his way over to a small pile of board games on the coffee table. "He petitioned the school and everything, then he had a fundraiser for equipment." Allison watches his pale face light up with a brief smile as he watches his friends. "Mr Clarke learned everything from him." He continued, "Pretty awesome right?"

Daniel nods with a sad smile, leaning back against the counter behind Max who looks at Mike, Lucas, and Dustin with sorrow. "We can't let him die in vain."

"Well, what do ya wanna do, Mike? The Chief's right on this we can't stop those Demodogs on our own." Dustin snapped at his friend. Allison turns her head toward the girl just behind her from the angle Steve had placed her leg and sees a raised eyebrow from the redhead who shifts in her chair.

"Demodogs?"

Dustin begins to explain the workings of a compound to the girl who puts her hands up in surrender. "It doesn't matter what we call them, the point is Dustin's right. Maybe when it was just Dart." Daniel speaks up in frustration, pushing a hand through his messy hair, leaning against the counter.

"But there's an army now." Lucas continues dejectedly.

"Exactly." Dustin finishes with a sigh, clasping his hands together on the table.

Silence fills the kitchen again then suddenly Mike speaks again. "His

army." He reveals quietly, his eyes downcast as he works through his thoughts.

"What do you mean?" Steve asks, his hand resting on the back of Allison's chair as he watched the black-haired kid.

"His army! Maybe if we stop him, we can stop his army too." With that, he whirls around heading toward the hallway in the lounge the others following quickly behind him.

Steve quickly pulls Allison's sock over the home-made ice pack to keep it in place when he realises he won't be able to keep her still and helps her follow. Down the dark hallway that had been littered with drawings of what Allison thought were blue tree roots. "These are the tunnels" Allison realises glancing over them with astonishment.

Will had done an amazing job before he had been taken over. Steve frowns at her and she promises to explain everything later. They walk in finding the five of them huddled around a crayon drawing of a spindly legged creature. "The Shadow Monster?" Dustin asks in confusion.

"It got Will that day in the field. The Doctors said it was like a virus, it infected him." Mike stated, glancing at Daniel and Dustin.

"And so, this virus it's connecting him to the tunnels?" Max asks looking at the drawings posted on Will's walls.

"To the tunnels, to the monsters, to the Upside Down. Everything!" Mike finished in a rush.

"Whoa, whoa! Slow down, slow down." Steve soothes, confusion lining his face.

"Okay so the Shadow Monsters inside everything, and if the vines feel something like pain then so does Will."

"And so does Dart," Lucas adds.

"Yeah. It's like what Mr Clarke taught us, the hive mind." Mike finishes quickly. Each of his friends nodding in understanding,



processing what this could mean. Allison stands beside Steve who crosses his arms while he watches the conversation play out.

"Hive mind?" He asks,

Dustin peers at him with wide eyes. "A collective consciousness, it's a superorganism."

"And this is the thing that controls everything." Mike points at the drawing in his hand tapping his finger against it.

"So, it's the brain?" Allison asks, frowning at the drawing, thinking its process sounded familiar to a movie or game Daniel had mentioned once.

"Like the Mind Flayer," Dustin exclaims, Lucas, snapping his fingers at him in recognition.

"The what?" Steve and Max say at the same time. Allison suddenly remembers Daniel talking about the Mind Flayer just a few days ago, he had mentioned that it was the monster Mike had chosen as the most dangerous in the *D&D* world and Daniel had agreed with him.

The kids gathered everyone into the kitchen and after trying to explain that the Mind Flayer needed to die it was Mike who came up with the plan they were all currently enacting- tying up Will Byers and making him reveal something. Nancy sat with Jonathan and Mrs Byers in the kitchen organising tasks for the kids while Steve sat with Allison on the couch across from the small unconscious frame of Will Byers. Hopper had left to clean out the shed as quickly as possible, so Nancy and Steve could start covering the walls with tarps and scraps from around the house to keep Will's location secret from him.

Steve and Allison both watched the boy opposite with a mixture of fear and trepidation while they waited, Allison's foot raised on a few pillows between them. "He doesn't deserve this. He's such a quiet, polite little kid, Steve. He was so nice to my brother when he didn't have to be when he had every reason not to trust people, but he still accepted him and made him apart of his group." Allison whispers, tears making her eyes shine as her gaze meets his. Steve sighs his hands squeezing his denim covered thighs tightly.

"None of them deserve this. I hate that lab for doing this to us." He returns quietly, anger simmering underneath his words. She hated it too. "What happened at the lab? Did you find your Dad?" Steve asks suddenly, throwing his arm over the back of the couch.

Allison swallows before nodding, a few tears finally spilling over. "Umm, yeah, we found him. H-h-he made me leave him be-h-hind." She hiccupped, pushing down the sobs that threatened to burst from her. She couldn't cry, she didn't want to. But she couldn't keep it in anymore and still keep her head straight. Brushing the few tears that had fallen away, her eyes meet her friends and he seems surprised to see the fierce fight in her gaze to stay in control all over again.

"He was locked away in the room with this giant black cavern when he made me leave. It was like a giant horrifying hole of nothingness, Harrington. I've never seen anything like it, it just spewed this white stuff and then it started to act up. My Dad made me leave to go find Daniel and the others. He said he had to take care of this then he was right behind me, I left, and Hopper stayed."

"Act up?" Steve asks concern written in his dark eyes.

"It started making noises and I swear to God it was alive or something. I didn't see anything, but Hopper said those Demodogs came out of it. It's the opening to all those tunnels Will drew." Allison replied, watching a look of realisation cross Steve's features. "What is it?"

"When we tried to catch Dart, we kinda got ambushed. There were so many of them and suddenly they all just turned and ran away. We could hear them, but we couldn't see them, so we followed the noise to the lab. They were underneath us the entire time." It had been plaguing Steve since they found themselves at the lab without coming across a single Demodog. "We didn't know about the tunnels..."

"We didn't know there was more than one... Daniel and I were so lucky, I guess you were right to not want us all to separate." Allison sighs, Steve grimacing in agreement.

He worried his lip thoughtfully. "What happened next?"

Breath shuddering Allison took a moment before continuing. "Hopper said my Dad stayed back because he needed to get everything under control, it couldn't stay unguarded. I don't know where he is, or if he's okay. All I have is what Hopper said, 'He can do more from down their kid, trust me.' I..." Her eyes drift over to Daniel, who is sifting through the pantry while Max and Mike sit on the floor next to the sink, a serious expression on his young face. "I didn't tell Daniel, I told him Dad wasn't there, that the lady at the front desk must've been confused. I didn't want to scare him. And by the time we got back to Will's room, the Demodogs were inside, there were dead people everywhere and all I could do was make sure Mike and Daniel didn't look."

"I don't want anything to happen to him. We barely even got to talk..." Allison continued, "What if something's happened and I never get the chance to... talk with him."

Staring out the window into the darkness, the growling came back to Allison and she shivered. There had been so much blood in those halls, she wore some of it from the first body they had come across, but nothing could compare to seeing Bob lying on the floor. Hopper pulling Joyce out of the building and over to where Allison guarded the kids. She was sure Bob's lifeless eyes would stay with her forever.

"Was he able to tell you anything? Was he involved in what happened last year?" Steve asked gently, a concerned frown marring his brow. Allison hesitated, darting between his eyes before shaking her head. "I'm sorry, Allison." Steve consoled, patting a hand on her foot gently.

He could see there was more to the story in her eyes but decided not to push, for now, Allison needed to rest before the next part of the plan began. Meanwhile, Allison's guilt was eating her up. She'd lied to Steve, she couldn't understand why she was protecting her Dad from his sins. Allison decided she would tell them all the truth once she had found a way back to the lab, despite everything, she needed to know if her Dad was okay. She would find her way back as soon as Will had given them some answers. She would not leave him to sit in that lab alone with those monsters and all that blood.

"You're up, Harrington, Wheeler," Hopper calls through the kitchen, both teens rising quickly from their respective places and following

the severe man outside, leaving Allison to play the last few hours out in her head in the following silence.

*Dusk had well and truly set in by the time the siblings arrived at the gate to Hawkins Lab. Despite the darkness and the time for the average American family's sit-down dinner well underway, the carpark before them was full and the clinical building ablaze with bright lights. No one sat in the office beside the gate, so the pair headed through, arriving at a wide expanse of glass.*

*"What if Dad's not here?" Daniel asks concerned, Allison took a deep breath before placing a hand on the metal bar. She had thought about this and was still determined to get some answers, whether that meant accosting someone or snooping, she was prepared to go full 1930's ball-busting Nancy Drew if she had to.*

*"With or without Dad, we aren't leaving until we get some answers. Let's do this."*

*Pushing the door open, Allison and Daniel walk through into the silent reception area. An older woman behind the circular wooden desk packing her things glances up in confusion when she spots the siblings. "Can I help you?" She asks, strapping her handbag onto her shoulder.*

*"Good Evening, I was wondering if you could tell me where I might find Richard Edwards? He's our Dad and we just wanted to bring him something home cooked from our Mother." Allison smiled innocently, jiggling her backpack lightly toward the frowning woman.*

*Her expression changed instantly as she looks warmly at the two smiling teens before her. "Of course! What sweet children you are to do such a wonderful thing for your Father! I'm sure he will just be thrilled to see you both." Allison and Daniel indulge her in another big smile and she placed a hand on her heart at the sight.*

*"Why don't you head on over to that elevator and you can find your Dad on level two. He should be in his office if not he will be any minute, he has a phone call in about ten minutes." The lady continued, pointing toward the shiny silver elevator on the opposite side of the room.*

*"Thank you so much, ma'am. Have a wonderful night!" Daniel says*

respectfully, Allison guiding him with a wave. They entered the elevator, massive smiles pasted on their faces until the doors close and they both sigh in relief. "I'm not designed to show that much emotion, I'm a pre-teen," Daniel muttered, earning a snort from the other girl.

"God that was torture, is that what being an adult is like? Pretending everything is perfect and people don't drive you mental. Maybe I need to look into some form of immortality elixir; I wonder if they have some in this creepy ass lab." Allison mused, tapping her chin thoughtfully, an annoyed huff coming from her brother.

"Hey," Allison said suddenly surprising the younger Edwards. "What did Harrington say to you when you guys were walking over?"

Daniel smirked, "He told me to tell you to mind your business when you asked about it." Allison's eyes narrowed in annoyance, Daniel knew her weakness was not knowing things, apparently, Steve had figured it out as well. "He just told me to make sure we look out for each other. I told him if you found out he thought you couldn't look after yourself there would be hell to pay." Allison chuckled, she already knew he had learnt that lesson.

The elevator doors opened revealing a long white hallway, it was empty and held the same chemical scent as a hospital. The siblings made their way to the end of the hallway together, Daniel spotting a woman with messy brunette hair, wearing a set of blue scrubs walking into a room on the left. "She looks like she works here, let's ask her where dad is." Daniel decided, marching over before Allison can respond.

Daniel knocked on the door before opening it, his jaw dropped, and Allison peaked over him to see into the room. Will Byers laid in the white hospital bed, pale and unconscious. Beside him sat a forlorn Mike Wheeler who watched his friend helplessly. A tall man stood beside the small woman they had followed also in light blue scrubs both frowning at the siblings in confusion.

"Can we help you?" The woman asked, her tired eyes running between the pair. Mike looked up from his friend spotting them and standing quickly.

"Daniel? Alli? What are you doing here? How did you know Will was here?" He asked quickly, approaching his newest friend with a defensive

edge. Daniel's eyes fall to his friend on the bed and he shook his head, stare falling on Mike again.

"We didn't. We came to see our Dad, he works here."

"Your Dad works here! Why didn't you tell us? Wait, did you know about all this, how long has your Dad worked here?" Mike demanded, stepping away in anger. The woman, Allison assumed was Will's Mom. Made her way around the bed, placing a gentle hand on Mike's shoulder.

"Mike-

"No! Did you know? Did you know about Will or El?" Mike shouted at Daniel and Allison who both watch him sadly.

"We didn't know until last night, Dustin told us everything that happened last year. We moved here so our Father could work at the lab permanently, but he has been coming here on business trips for about a year. We don't know what he knows, it's why we're here." Allison spoke calmly to the boy, "Dustin is with Lucas, Max, and Steve. Dart grew into a Demogorgon/Dog hybrid thing and they are trying to catch him. Somethings happening again." She finishes in a rush.

"Steve? As in Steve Harrington?" Mike asked in disbelief, his reserved gaze still now quite sure if he could trust them or not.

"Yeah, Dustin couldn't reach anyone, he's really worried about you and Will," Allison says glancing at the boy on the bed worriedly. "Is he okay?" The woman behind Mike squeezed his shoulder again and shook her head, tears filling her eyes.

"We don't know."

"Is it because of his episodes?" Daniel asked Mike, who shrugged, arms crossed.

"I think so." He seemed pensive for a moment before continuing, "I think whatever is causing this, the Shadow Monster, it's related to the tunnels, the episodes, Dart, everything. You remember how Will reacted to Dart when he first saw him, I think he knew something." Mrs Byers nodded in agreement confirming that after the episode Mike had witnessed at school that day she had brought him to the lab.

"How are we going in here- Oh! Richard's children, he has the most precious photo of the two of you on his desk, it's quite sweet. I'm Doctor Owens, your Father's boss. Now how did you find your way in here?" He exclaimed in an overly exuberant tone, Allison found it disconcerting that he appeared 1. Absolutely fine with children roaming his secret lab. And 2. That he appeared upbeat while Will laid unconscious just a few feet away.

Allison frowned, her eyes finding Daniel's before she repeated the lie she had told the receptionist, unsure if she should tell him the truth. Mrs Byers tossed a small smile of reassurance before telling him the truth. "We've come for answers, something is happening in Hawkins and we plan on getting to the bottom of it."

Doctor Owens raised his brows slightly at the fierce tone the teenager had adopted. His previously cheery smile fell, and he nodded in understanding. "We are aware of the current situation and we're working to fix it. I was just about to take the Chief on a little excursion, how about you join me, my dear. We might be able to find Doctor Edwards on the way." He replied in an even voice, regarding Allison thoughtfully.

Nodding in agreement, Allison glanced at the stony face of the Chief, who stepped up beside Mrs Byers and placed a hand on her shoulder affectionately. The woman looked up at him with a smile before guiding Mike back to his seat and pulling up another for Daniel.

"I want to go with you." Daniel frowned, shaking off the gentle hand Mrs Byers- Joyce as she insisted on being called- placed on his arm.

"You can't, Buddy. I promise I'll be back as soon as possible and I'll tell you everything I learn from Dad, okay?" Allison placated, she pulled her brother into a tight hug, attempting to calm his worry. "I'll see you soon." Daniel nodded, allowing Joyce to guide him to the seat beside Mike. "Let's get going then." She said turning from the room with the two men behind her.

Seeing her Dad in his white lab coat, tired and unshaven was a surprise. She had never seen the toll his job took on him, she had never understood. The room was large and white, people sat at desks or milled around equipment. Her Dad was in an office at the very back of the room with glass separating the room they had walked into. He had rushed out, fear

on his face as he watched his only Daughter stand in front of the thing he had tried to keep her from.

Hidden behind a thick glass was an endless dark hole. Allison watched a white substance float in the air above it, like ash that had been caught in the wind. It felt alive, it breathed and exhaled more white flakes. Hopper stood beside her, he placed a hand on her shoulder when she went to stand closer. "Trust me, Kid, that's not something you want to be closer to."

"What is it?" She asked.

"The entrance to a series of tunnels underneath the entire town. It's the Upside Down." Hopper replied, not taking his eyes from the hole.

"Allison?"

She turned finding her Dad watching her with wide eyes. "Dad, we need to talk." She said calmly. Her face set in stone while the older man's eyes darted between her and his boss. "Right now."

She was terrified but refused to show it as she followed her Father back into the office. He closed the door and turned to her, he raised his arms as if to embrace her and she stepped back, raising a hand to stop him. "I want to know everything, I need to know what you know, what you've done. My friends are out there right now risking their lives to stop whatever is roaming around."

Richard sighed, he stepped around his desk and sank into his seat, his hand messing up his dark hair. "Kid, I don't know what you've been told but you need to understand that this lab is doing everything it can to fix its past mistakes."

"Past mistakes? You mean holding children against their will and torturing them? Turning them into little weapons. Or was the mistake attempting to kill anybody who knew? Including four children." Arms crossed, Allison felt her voice rising until she ran the air from her lungs. "Were you involved? Did you help them torture that poor girl, Eleven?"

Richard watched his daughter sadly before nodding once. A tear slipped down her cheek but was wiped away as quickly as it fell. "You need to



*understand- I thought I was doing the right thing. I was taught that Eleven was going to be able to single-handedly keep us safe from whatever threatened the country. We realised our mistakes, what happened will never happen again."*

*"And what about the Upside Down? Why is it a secret when it's an active danger to this town?" Allison spits, unable to wrap her mind around what her Father had done. He had helped to torture children then came to his own.*

*"I'm the only person from the lab who still works here and has even an inkling of understanding of how this other world works. We thought it was over, we thought we had it under control enough to study it."*

*Allison huffs a laugh, hands holding onto her upper arms tightly. "You were all too busy playing scientist to notice that you were putting everyone in danger. You've all learned nothing." She pushed a hand through her messy hair roughly and forced herself to breathe deeply. "Does Mom know?"*

*Richard shook his head quickly, "You can't tell her, Alli. I kept this from all of you on purpose, you are in incredible danger now. Ever since I started working at this lab last year, I've done everything I can to keep you all safe. You have to believe I thought I was doing the right thing." He pauses for a moment, running a hand over his face before standing and coming to stand in front his young girl. GINGERLY he took her hands in his.*

*"Kid, I promise I will tell you anything you want to know, but I can't do it here. I'm gonna take you home, okay? It's not safe here." He hesitates for a moment, "I just need you to understand, everything that happened here, that is still happening here is for a good cause-"*

*"I will never believe that torturing children and putting people in danger is something good!" Allison cut him off, pulling her hands away. Tears began to fall faster than she could push them away. "I've idolized you my whole life, I thought you were the hero, but you're a monster." She sobbed, Richard's eyes filled and he opened his mouth to respond a loud grumble stopped him in his tracks.*

*"You need to go, right now!" Richard shouted, running back around to his desk, and opening a drawer. Seconds later a loud alarm began to sound in*

*the room. "Allison, you need to leave."*

*"What's going on?" She replied, watching as the people in the other room scrambled about. She could see Hopper yelling at Doctor Owens.*

*"I don't know, but I need to get it under control and I can't do that while you're here. Take the Byers with you." Her Dad shouted he rushed back around to her. "I will be right behind you."*

*"Daniel's with the Byers now. Come with me Dad, I don't want to leave you here." Allison shouts as another rumble sounds. Richard grabs onto her hand and hauls her toward the exit. Hopper spots them and gestures for her to leave.*

*"I'll be right behind you, kid. Get everyone ready." Hopper shouted.*

*"Keep your Brother safe, Alli. Go now!" Richard shouted. Allison nodded taking in the scared eyes of her Father one last time before sprinting from the room, taking the emergency stairs down to Daniel and the others.*

*She made it there in less than a minute, Joyce grabbing her worriedly when she entered. "We need to go right now. Hopper's right behind me." Sure enough, seconds later Hopper entered out of breath and panicked. "Where's my Dad?"*

*"He can do more down there, Kid, trust me. We need to leave."*

*Together they planned, and then they left. Allison slipped in the blood of the first body they'd come across. She remembered opening her eyes and finding lifeless brown staring back. The man's once white lab coat was now stained in red, his middle pulverized by the never-ending teeth a Demodog. Hopper was holding an unconscious Will but had yanked her up by her sweater while Joyce protected Mike and Daniel's eyes.*

*Everyone was gone, she realised, looking around the empty house. Allison wished she wasn't injured if only, so she could have a task to take her mind off what she had seen in the last few hours. She thought of Dustin and his joking nature again, it was crazy to her that mere hours ago she had been laughing at the boys, teasing Steve, and jumping off buses.*

Maybe it was naïve, the carefree attitude she had adopted in the beginning, she had hidden behind her logic, it told her none of this was real. Seeing Bob being ripped to pieces by the delightfully named Demodogs had stolen those last shreds of doubt from her mind. It had come as a shock to her and Daniel to realise there had been possibly hundreds of these creatures roaming the town while they walked in the dark earlier that night, they really had no idea what they were up against while they were making those stupid plans to capture Dart.

The first tear was hard to let go but it broke the dam that had built up inside her. She abandoned her façade of being brave in her solitude, for the first time since Allison had left her Father in that room, she allowed herself to cry. She cried for him, and Bob, and all those people who had died in sterile hallways. Then she cried for her friends, and the kids, and Joyce and Hopper. Finally, she cried for herself, Allison had never been the type to show her tears, she rarely ever cried, but the last 48 hours had worn her down. The worst part, this was all far from over.

## 11. Saturday II Part 3

Well, it's been a little longer than anticipated, huh?

Am I the only one who feels like 20gayteen is just flying by? This is the final chapter for Saturday, we are nearing the end of the road guys! I've really been struggling to get this right, it's going great in my head but finding the words hasn't been easy. This really isn't my best work but I wanted to get something out. I haven't abandoned this! I have a sequel that I've worked wayyyyy to hard on to let this go

Anyway enjoy, thank you to everyone who has followed, and liked, and reviewed! it's such an amazing feeling to see that support

*Yeah, I could chase you, we'd be up all night  
Like the old days, yeah, we'd never had a fight  
Still, I don't know, maybe that just goes to show  
I don't know if you're just gonna go, you're just gonna leave  
We're just living off pages, this book's for the ages  
A rollercoaster like we said, hon*

*About you - G Flip*

Hopper, Joyce, Mike, and Jonathan stayed in the shed with Will. Everyone else busied themselves inside and waited for news. Dustin sat on the couch where Will had been, watching the front yard as if his life depended on it. Lucas and Max were out of sight, while Nancy sat at the dining table, hands clasped before her. Allison and Daniel sat together in the same place Allison had been for the last hour.

Daniel had taken the place where her foot had rested and leaned against her chest, his breaths deep and even, she couldn't see his face to see if he had fallen asleep. Allison couldn't say she would blame him though, her eyes had drifted shut a few times and despite Steve's encouragement, she just couldn't sleep. Her gaze left her brother's sandy head and found Steve, only a few feet in front of her swinging his bat from side to side in preparation. The thing looked deadly, she supposed that was its purpose.

"Do you think he'll be okay?"

Allison turns to the soft voice of Dustin who watches her with worried eyes. Gesturing him over, she sits up slightly, so he can join her. He walks over dejectedly and allows her to wrap her spare arm around him gently. He rests his head on her shoulder, the brim of his hat brushing her cheek.

"I know that Joyce isn't gonna let anything happen to him, we're all gonna do our best, alright?" She answers, squeezing his arm in support. Dustin nods but stays beside Allison, resting his arms and head on the edge of the couch staring ahead at nothing, she can see his eyes growing heavy with each slow blink. It'd been a long day and she was sure no one would judge the two boys dozing while they could.

The brunette's gaze moved to the dining table where Nancy sat, she frowned. Her hands had remained clasped before her since they had taken Will to the garage. Nancy wore a heavy look as her gaze switched between watching the back door and inspecting her pale hands. The two girls still had not spoken leaving an uncomfortable pit in the older girl's stomach, she hated the thought of losing Nancy, her first friend in Hawkins. Gently setting her Brother down, Allison rises from her place on the sofa instantly drawing Steve's attention.

Resolved to set the record straight, Allison tested her weight on her injury happy to find the pain manageable. Her ankle felt and looked much better, she hated to admit it, but Steve's advice had been right. The look on his face telling her to sit back down was probably advice she should follow as well but she rebuffed his stern look with a quick shake of her head.

Allison clasped his arm as she walked past gingerly. He nodded in greeting, opening his mouth before frowning in confusion when she continued past him and joined Nancy at the table. Steve released a deep sigh as he watched the blue-eyed girl seat herself hesitantly across from his ex-girlfriend. The girl refused to look at Allison, her eyes never leaving her clasped hands on the old wood. It felt like hours of discomfort before she finally spoke, still refusing to meet the older girl's eyes. Steve winced in sympathy.

"Did you know?"

Gripping the table's edges tightly, Allison observed the girl trying to show her the honesty within her gaze. "Nancy, I didn't know anything until Friday, I swear. Dustin and Steve had to tell me after everything with Dart, if they didn't Daniel and I would be at home asleep and safe. I know we haven't known each other long but there is no one here I've been more honest with." Nancy stands from the table in frustration, pacing before the girl before leaning against the wall with a sigh. Allison noticed Lucas and Max sitting opposite each other in the hallway, both watching Allison inquisitively.

Hesitantly, Steve takes a seat beside Allison, facing a now alert Dustin and Daniel who talk amongst themselves quietly. Refusing to lift her gaze from Nancy, Allison continues to plead her case, "I've told you about my past, about Nicole. I don't share those things with just anyone. I need you to trust that if I had known about what was happening in that lab, I would have tried to stop it."

Finally, Nancy's dark eyes meet Allison's blue. The icy look within them only intensifies when their gazes lock. "You've told me about your past and I've told you about mine. Barb was my best friend and that lab, the one your Father works for, covered up her murder. You'll forgive me if I'm having a hard time believing anyone who's like remotely associated to that place." The younger teen pauses for a second, a finger on her chin before she powers on, "Honestly, how can I believe you? You had no idea that your Dad was an evil scientist who experimented on children, tried to murder all of us, lied about Will's disappearance, and covered up my best friend's death. Yeah right, gag me. You may have Steve fooled but you won't fool me, I'm not susceptible to the wiles of a pretty face."

"Steve isn't the only one who believes me." Allison says quietly, her eyes darting to the kids around her. Nancy follows her gaze to Dustin who nods in confirmation. "I understand what you're going through, If I were you I wouldn't believe me! This is all insane! But I thought you were my friend, and I thought we could move past this to work together and see the bigger picture." She continues, her voice gaining strength from the truth in her words.

Nancy scoffs, resuming her pacing. With a deep sigh the girl adjusts

her coat before meeting Allison's eyes a final time, "Friends don't help murder and torture people." With that Nancy stomps to the front door yanking it open and closing it behind her.

Steve rises from his chair with a grimace gesturing toward the door. "Let me talk to her, go check on the shit-heads." He mumbles uncomfortably. Allison nods and heads towards Dustin and Daniel smiling sadly at Lucas and Max on the way through.

"You okay, Alli?" Max asks with a small frown.

Nodding, Allison leans against the wall with a sigh. "I'm okay, Max. I'm sorry you guys had to see us fight." She says sadly, eyes darting between the young redhead and Lucas. "I totally get it if you have reservations about Daniel and myself and what we knew about our Dad, but I promise you we both knew nothing."

Lucas raises his knees to his chest, fiddling with a thread on his dark pants before answering. "Do you know something now?" His dark eyes reached hers questioningly and she hesitated a moment before shaking her head.

"Nothing that's helpful, unfortunately." Allison said carefully, "Just know that Daniel is completely innocent, and I'm so thankful you have all made him one of your own, after all this is done you're all gonna need each other.

Lucas sighed, sharing a brief look with Max who nodded quickly. "We believe that you and Daniel didn't know." Allison smiled slightly, "And you don't need to worry about Daniel, Alli, he's a member of our party." Nodding, Allison backs away from the pair waving slightly. Of all the horrible things that had happened since the Edwards' had moved to Hawkins, Allison could never regret talking to those kids at the diner just a week ago.

Entering the lounge, Daniel and Dustin watch the shadow of Steve and Nancy in the front yard in confusion. "They've been standing like that for a few minutes." Dustin declares, frowning at the pair. Allison shoots them both a reassuring smile before resting on the couch opposite. She can see the two of them from the corner of her eye while her conversation with Nancy jets through her brain.

Allison didn't want to lose her friend, she had told Nancy the truth before; no one in Hawkins knew her like Nancy, she had revealed everything to her. She felt a bond to the younger girl, a comradeship over shared stories and pain. The most frustrating part of their argument is that Allison understood, she sympathised with her friend, it's hard to trust people, it's impossible when you've been burned. With a sigh, Allison glanced out the window, hearing the loud whispers from the front yard. Steve stood before Nancy, his face in his hands while she points a finger at him and talks quickly.

"I get it, Steve I really do! She's gorgeous but I thought you were better than this. After everything we've been through in the last year, I thought you were smarter than this. Allison and her family are the enemy." Nancy whisper shouts, her hand flailing toward the house.

Steve rubs his forehead, his face turned toward the ground while he withstands Nancy's barrage. His hands find his hair before he replies quietly, "You have no idea what you're talking about, Nance."

"How long have you known her Dad works lab?"

"Does it matter? He just sacrificed himself to save everyone inside. Look," He sighed deeply, pointing toward himself in frustration. "I get that your worried and you don't trust her and Daniel but after everything that's happened in the last 24 hours I do trust her, and you can doubt my reasoning but just... trust me, Nance. I know things between us are messed up but that doesn't change me or us." Steve replies tentatively, "Trust that I would never risk you or those kids."

They stare at each other, Nancy with sorrow at the pain and desperation swimming in Steve's gaze. Eventually she nods, looking out toward the trees, her arms wrapped around herself protectively. Steve observes the girl before him sensing the obvious discomfort she feels in his presence once the argument fades. Just a few days ago they were inseparable and in love, in the case of one of them the love had faded; if it ever even existed.

The space between them was minimal, only one or two paces but Allison thought it may as well be the Mariana Trench. She could feel the sadness and awkwardness radiating off Steve from where she sat



on the couch, it was clear to everyone except Nancy that he was still head over heels for the girl in front of him.

"Steve..."

The back door blows open, slamming loudly against the wall, Hopper, Joyce, Mike, and Jonathan bursting in out of breath and putting an end to a conversation Nancy had tried to start once already while they helped cover the walls in the shed. Steve jogged inside, equally relieved, and disappointed that the conversation had been interrupted again.

"What happened?" Dustin asks as Steve walks into the kitchen, everyone crowded around Hopper who sits at the table writing. Allison stands beside him, eyeing him questioningly. He nods, squeezing her upper arm gently before turning back to the commotion.

"I think he's talking, just not with words." Hopper replies, drawing a series of dashes and dots onto an old envelope. Everyone leans over watching intensely.

"Wait, what is that?" Steve queries bewildered as Hopper begins solving the riddle.

"Morse code," The room answers at once. They realise it spells 'Here' and the room jumps into motion, "Will's still in there." Hopper and Joyce share a look before heading back to the garage with Jonathan and Mike, who carry a walkie and a boombox. The rest gather around the table with a sheet of paper and a Morse code cheat sheet, waiting for the first beeps to come through.

It doesn't take long for the message to come through, Steve leaning next to Nancy with a frown as he reads the message with her, "Close gate." Allison worries her lip as she watches them share a brief look of confusion, Steve's hand finding the handle of his bat momentarily. The gate was at the lab, that much she was sure of, it was the void that her Father had stayed behind to protect. It meant they were going back. Allison had been planning to find her way back regardless, despite the horrible things she knew her Dad had been complicit in; leaving him wasn't an option. She resolved that finding

him would benefit there new mission, he had obviously been working around the gate of awhile, maybe he knew how to close it.

A shrill ring echoed throughout the room, everyone jumping in alarm while Dustin shot to his feet to stop it ringing. "Shit! Shit! Shit!" He panics pulling the phone from the hook and slamming it back with a sigh. It rings again seconds later, Nancy pulling the mint phone off the wall with a grunt and slamming it on the floor.

"Do you think he heard that?" Max asks quietly, turning to Steve.

"It's just a phone, it could be anywhere, right?" He says, eyes darting between Allison who wraps an arm around her brother fearfully and Nancy, who frowns. The deep angry growls that permeate the air seconds later give them all the answer. They all turn toward the front door in fear, Allison still clutching Daniel. Steve comes up beside them, bat in hand.

"That's not good." Dustin breathes, refusing to move his eyes from the front of the house. Mike rushes in followed by Joyce and Jonathan who holds the tiny frame of Will in his arms. Mike gestures to his party and they all rush to the window trying to spot the Demodogs.

"Stay back, Allison. Your injured." Nancy orders, waving a hand toward the girl when she steps forward. Allison opens her mouth to argue but stops when Joyce grabs her shoulder and shakes her head.

"You need to stay back, Honey." She says in a hurried voice, Hopper storming in seconds later his hands filled with guns and shouting at the kids to get away from the windows. Allison's frightened gaze meets Steve's for only a second, but it holds so much emotion it almost halts her breath.

He turns toward the front door braced for a fight, his bat in position. He's scared, he can feel the fear coursing through his body, as he pushes Dustin back a bit into Allison's waiting arms. He needs to protect them, he glances back one more time finding his friend pulling the younger kids behind her, steel setting her eyes ablaze.

Nancy and Hopper hold the guns, Lucas, who is standing only a few steps from Allison has his wrist rocket, Max standing behind him

unarmed. On her opposite side Joyce is being held by Jonathan who meets her eyes briefly and nods, she returns it. She knows they aren't okay but for now they have each other's back. Mike stands behind his sister, candle stick holder in hand.

Growls Allison was all too familiar with begin again filling the once silent room, everyone within following them with eyes and ears as they circle the house. Daniel grips Allison's hand tightly, "I won't let anything happen to you." She promises in a whisper, gripping back just as tight, her left hand holding onto Dustin's maroon hoodie in a vice grip.

"What are they doing?" Nancy gasps, following a loud snarl to the left of the house. The growls seem to shake the small house as they circle back to the front, everyone following with their weapons. The growls give way to a loud, unorthodox buzzing sound and then an inhuman whine before everything falls still.

Allison watches the window anxiously, waiting for something to break the stillness, she screams with the others when the dark body of a Demodog bursts into the house. It slams against the wall opposite before falling with a thud, unmoving. "Holy shit." Dustin says, removing Allison's hand from his sleeve and stepping toward the creature. Allison follows, stopping behind Steve, who has his bat raised in preparation of an attack.

"Is it dead?" Max asks tentatively, refusing to take her eyes off it. The Chief takes a deep breath before moving closer, moving its head with a gentle foot. The creature remains still but a creaking at the front door has everyone on alert again.

The old lock on the door clicks itself unlocked and the chain quickly follows suit. "Oh my God." Allison breathes, grabbing onto Daniel and pulling him behind her. The door creaks open and a tall girl walks through, her nose bleeding and black ringing her eyes. Everyone lowers their weapons in shock and suddenly it clicks who the angry looking girl is.

Mike steps forward in shock, tears in his eyes matching the girls. This was Eleven.

Hopper had taken Mike into another room after he revealed he had been hiding Eleven. Dustin and Lucas had moved in quickly to embrace their long-lost friend. Daniel stood beside a hesitant Max both looking intimidated for different reasons. Max was finally meeting the Mage, the girl whose ghost had kept her apart from the boys since she first met them, and she wanted Eleven to like her. Daniel was looking at the girl who his Father might have held captive and tortured. He couldn't know for sure, but he suspected his sister knew more than she was letting on when it came to their Dad, she lied and said she didn't see him at the lab earlier. Daniel thought Allison was a shit liar and had told her so on many occasions, he wondered why she felt the need to lie to him back at the lab.

Allison watched the girl from the corner with Steve, Jonathan, and Nancy feeling a terrible feeling punch through her stomach at the odd nature of the girl, who stuck her finger in Dustin's mouth, marvelling at his teeth. She didn't know how to interact with people, Dustin said she didn't know how to be a kid. That was the lab's fault; that was her Dad's fault. The hatred she felt for her Father in that moment was almost enough to make her abandon her plan to try and save him. He had assisted in stealing who knows how many children and testing them; torturing them, why should she risk her neck to save him?

Jonathan touched her shoulder tentatively and she jumped, her eyes snapping to his in surprise. His dark eyes assessed her in that way she had come to find specific to the younger teen and he squeezed lightly. "Are you okay?" He spoke quietly, Nancy stood beside him eyes measuring the pair questioningly. She assumed Jonathan distrusted Allison like she did. Nancy's eyes met Allison's for a second before the older brunette nodded, placing a hand over Jonathan's briefly before stepping away, bringing herself closer to Steve, who watched the moment unfold with a frown.

"I..." Allison stuttered, her eyes returning to Eleven who was currently embracing Joyce. They spoke quickly before the pair disappeared toward Will's room. "I'm struggling to look at that girl knowing what my own Father had a hand in doing. I-I-I wish I could have helped her... I wish I could have saved her." Allison whispered, watching after the girl in despair. Steve wraps an arm around her

shoulders comfortingly and leads her away from Jonathan and Nancy who both watch her with puckered brows. Allison finds herself beside Max who looks forlornly at Lucas, Dustin, and Daniel who talk together quietly.

"She hates me, Alli." Max says quietly, her eyes never leaving the boys. "She hates me, the boys are never going to accept me now. I can't believe I thought they would want a Zoomer in their party: I'm so stupid." Max continues her hand running through her long hair in frustration.

"Hey, look Eleven has been through a lot and maybe she's just gonna need some time to get to know you. You are amazing MADMAX and those boys would be crazy not to make you their Zoomer. You are totally the coolest kid I've ever met, and my brother is that little wastoid cinephile over there." Allison grins cheekily, nudging the girl with her elbow. "You'll be fine, Kid, trust me."

Max looks up at the older girl and returns her grin, surprising Allison when she throws her arms around her briefly. "I do trust you, you know. You're cool." She finishes pulling away awkwardly and backing away toward the boys with a blush lighting her cheeks. Allison waves once at the girl before turning away and finding herself alone for the first time in a while. It's quiet but it doesn't last long as Joyce and Hopper start rushing around again, bringing Eleven to the kitchen table and making plans to close the gate.

In the blink of an eye Eleven has confirmed she can close the gate and Joyce and Jonathan have a plan to take Will to Hopper's to attempt to expel the Shadow Monsters control. Hopper is alone in the kitchen when Allison swoops in, a determined look on her face. The Chief watches her apprehensively already knowing he wasn't going to like where this conversation was headed.

"I want to go with you."

Hopper watched the young woman before him, her blue eyes refusing to leave his- hardened like steel. He knew it was coming, he had forced the kid to leave her Father in a lab crawling with possibly hundreds of those creatures. Whether she liked what he did or not they both knew she would go back for him. "Kid, I don't know if it's

such a good idea," Hopper cautioned. Allison opened her mouth to argue but Hopper cut her off before she could make her case, "Look, I get that it's your Dad. Trust me, I get it, but we don't know what where walking into and I can't look after you and El."

"I didn't ask you to look out for me, Chief. I'm going back to the lab, so you can either take me or I'll find my own way. He's trapped in that hell-hole. Whether I agree with his choices or not, he's my Dad and I refuse to leave him there. Besides, there's a possibility he could help, we have to assume he has decent knowledge on the Upside Down, we could use that to our advantage." Allison bit out, she's gasping for air by the time she's finished. Her anger and fear fuelling her words. Her sharp gaze never left Hopper, her fists balled at her sides and her posture straight despite the protest from her sore ankle. She knew if Hopper didn't believe her resolution, she wasn't getting anywhere near that lab.

"What about your ankle? I wanted you to stay with Harrington and the Kids, keep 'em outta trouble." Hopper replies, sighing into his hand. Allison understood his hesitation, she was a minor, a wickedly injured one at that regardless of if she was resolute in not needing him to watch her back, he would.

"I'm fine, Chief. Look, all I'm asking for is a lift and then I can totally look after myself. You said that my Dad could do more where he was, well, then let's figure out a way to put that to use." Allison crosses her arms with a shrug before continuing in a persuasive tone, "Besides I imagine I'm going to be like the last thing the Demodogs will want to pay attention too, Eleven closing the gate is going to make you two a pretty enticing distraction."

The Chief frowns at the girl, she can see the acceptance creeping onto the Chief's face, he sighs once more before nodding his head. "Okay, you can come, go and do what you need to do, we leave in ten." He grumbled before side stepping her and heading down the hall to Will's room. He stops and turns to her, deep frown set on his brow, "Promise me you'll watch out for yourself?" He stopped beside Allison pointing a finger at her warningly, she nods, with that he stomps out the front door leaving a stunned teen behind him.

Allison breathed a deep sigh of relief before heading to the lounge to

collect her bag. She stopped abruptly when Daniel, Dustin, Lucas, and Max stood before her, arms crossed and frowns lining their faces. "You're going back to the lab?" Dustin asks accusingly.

"Yeah, look, I need to make sure our Dad is okay." Allison's found her brother who stared back at her in betrayal, "I lied and I'm sorry. I saw Dad at the lab, I just didn't want to scare you and he told me to protect you, so I did. Daniel, I'm so sorry." Daniel's eyes fell to his shoes before he met his sisters broken gaze again.

"I know you lied, I knew the second you came into Will's room that you were lying. Was Dad okay?" Daniel says quietly, surprising everyone in the room. Allison nods, reaching a hand out to her Brother and clasping his outstretched hand.

"He was okay, I'm going with Eleven and the Chief to the lab. I'm going to find him." Dustin opened his mouth to argue, Allison raised a hand to silence him a sad smile on her face. "I know it's stupid and dangerous, but I don't have time to argue all the ways it is those things," Allison shook her head, stepping away from the four of them.

"Wait!" Daniel exclaimed, rushing from the room, and emerging with his backpack. "Take this with you, it's got the walkie in it and a few other things you might find useful. It's on the right channel, if you need us or Steve reach out." Allison accepted the bag, placing it by her feet and enveloping her Brother in a tight hug.

Sandy strands of hair tickled her nose, but she refused to pull away, squeezing until he begged her to stop. "Do what Steve says, all of you, you hear me? And please stay out of trouble." Daniel and the others nodded but made no promises, not that Allison expected them too. Max stepped up and threw her arms around the older girl's midsection before stepping back with a whispered good luck.

"Please be careful." She whispers again before joining the others, Allison nods with a reassuring smile.

Lucas did much the same, albeit more awkwardly before Dustin stepped forward, his hand lifting his hat, so he could push through his curls with a sigh. "You gonna behave yourself, Dweeb?" Allison joked, flicking the brim of his hat when he finally approached.

"Are you? Is this a good idea, separating from the party? We already did this today and it didn't really go well." Dustin asks accepting Allison's quick embrace. She chuckled at the younger kid, knowing he already had something extravagant planned.

"I'm gonna be fine, look, the way I see it, Eleven is going to be pulling the focus. I should be able to get in and out before any Demodog knows I'm there." Allison surmises, earning a thoughtful look from the pre-teens surrounding her. "Just, look after Harrington for me, yeah?" He nods before joining the others, Allison can see the wheels turning in his head as he stands beside a forlorn Daniel and Max.

Picking up her pack, Allison turned to the backdoor hoping to find Harrington before she has to motor. She waves once more at the kids and exits hoping they stay out of trouble. She spots Steve quickly once she's out in the crisp Fall night. He's passing a space heater to a dejected Nancy, a reassuring smile on his face.

"Steve..."

"It's okay Nance, really." He steps away from the confused girl, who opens her mouth to call him back before Allison cuts in,

"Harrington."

He turns toward her light voice, a frown forming on his brow when he takes in her backpack. "I'll see you later, Nance..." He says distractedly, heading toward the blue-eyed girl without a backward glance. The girl behind him watching on with a deep frown at being disregarded.

"Hey, what's going on?" He asks meeting her halfway, "We're on babysitting duty." Allison clasps her hands tightly, refusing to meet her friends eye when she tells him.

"I'm going to the lab with Eleven and Hopper."

"Yeah, that's funny." Steve grunts, running his hand through his hair and watching her with humour laced eyes, it quickly turns to disbelief when her gaze meets his and he sees her determination. "You can't be serious! Allison, you are going to get yourself killed!"



And that's not me doubting your ability to take care of yourself, that's the obvious outcome to trying to go against possibly hundreds of these freaking Demo-things."

"Demodogs," Allison corrects, feeling like Dustin for a moment. "I'll be okay, Hopper and Eleven are going to be at the gate so the attention won't be on me, I get in, find my Dad, see what he knows, and get out. Simple." She repeats, in her mind it was that simple, she really did expect not to encounter any trouble, Hopper and Eleven would be making too much noise for them to notice her. "Look, I just came to say goodbye and thank you for watching over Daniel, there is no one I trust more than you."

"This is insane, Alli, c'mon. Just stay here with me and Hopper will find your Dad." Steve panicked, looking over Allison's shoulder to try and spot Hopper, he hoped he could talk some sense into him.

"No."

"Fine, I'm coming with you."

"No way in Hell, Harrington." Allison sighed, grabbing Steve's hands within her own. "You don't need you risk yourself for me. Besides, you need to stay with Daniel and the others, they are going to get themselves in trouble and you might be the only one who can stop them." Steve stared at their joined hands, his face set in a frown. Allison could see how much this was bothering him and winced in sympathy, he was protective, and she was leaving his protection in favour of an admittedly stupid plan, again.

Pulling his hands from hers, they found their way back to his messy hair and he tugged the strands in frustration. "This is a mistake, Alli. You're going to get yourself killed," Steve muttered quietly, gently placing his hands on her arms and shaking her lightly.

"I can't leave my Dad." Allison cries, pulling away from Steve and wrapping her arms around herself. "Steve, I left him there! I could have fought harder, I could have said he was an idiot, I could have made Hopper take me back and I didn't! I let my anger and my fear rule me and now my Dad is stuck in a hell-hole." Sighing, Allison tore her hands through her long locks, her fingers clutching her skull as

she turned away from her friend's sorrowful eyes, "Hopper will watch out for me." The teen continued, refusing to meet Steve's eyes, "I'm taking a walkie just in case. I promise if shit hits the fan, I'll call for help."

Steve knew he was cornered, he couldn't leave the kids alone. He groaned, lowering his head to her level to take her in with worried eyes, "You'll be careful?" He asked gently, his expressive dark eyes catching hers and refusing to let go. She nodded once, and he returned the gesture before placing a hand on her scalp and guiding her into a crushing embrace, his other hand securing her shoulders to his chest. Her arms wrapped around his chest, clutching his upper back, "Take my bat with you, Nance and I found another shot gun, I'll use that."

Allison nodded, to surprised at the embrace to put up a fight at Steve surrendering his weapon. She felt warm and safe in that quick hug and found she was disappointed when he made to let go. "This is the second time we've separated today, I really think we need to stop doing that." He whispered, pulling away with a serious expression.

"Last time, I promise." Allison smiles, watching as he quickly grabs the new gun and his bat before gesturing them both forward. "Are you sure you want me to take your bat? I can take the gun."

Steve shook his head passing her his treasured weapon without hesitation, "Trust me, it will give me piece of mind to know you have that." He mused, touching one of the shiny nails fondly.

"Does the bat have a name?"

"Why would the bat have a name?"

"Steve Harrington you've had this baby for a year and you never christened it! Honestly, what was your life like without me?"

"I wonder that myself sometimes too." Steve grins, coming to a stop before Hoppers wagon. Allison returns his smile easily, her eyes falling to the bat in thought.

"I think you should call it something bad ass, like Leia, or Ripley, or

Æthelflæd. Something Iconic. Maybe Veronica, that's a badass name, I could picture a Veronica like murdering the mean girl at school or something." Allison decided, twirling the bat in her hands.

"Ethel-what?" Steve stuttered, his brow raising in confusion. Allison watches the boy frown and her smile grows. The confoundment on his face as he tried to wrap his tongue around the old Mercian leaders name was a delight to watch and a moment of respite for the brunette. "It doesn't matter, we can name the bat later, not Ethel-whatever."

Allison laughed lightly, tucking the handle of the bat into her bag, and fastening the zipper around it. "Remind me to teach you about Vikings and Mercian rulers when this is all over, Wastoid."

Steve opened his mouth to reply but closed it quickly when Hopper stormed out, Eleven following behind quickly. "You ready, kid?" He asked gruffly, opening the door to the sheriffs' truck, and throwing a duffle bag in. He pulls the seat to the passenger side down so Allison can get in. Allison nods, her humour sliding away as her eyes dart between the cantankerous man and the serious young girl.

Eleven watched her without emotion for a moment before walking to the car and standing beside Hopper, both waiting her to get in. Allison felt her heart racing in her chest but refused to let her fear show, turning to Steve with a final reassuring smile and a squeeze of his arm.

"I gotta motor, watch those shit-heads, they've got plans." Allison warns, stepping back with a wave. "See you soon." Allison reiterated before turning on her heel and throwing her bag in the car before sliding in with a grim smile aimed at the sheriff.

"Here, you know how to use this?" The older man said, passing through a hand gun to the teen. Allison nodded, tucking it under her bag. "Harrington needs the bat, use that instead." Hesitantly Allison passed the bat to Hopper, resting her fingers on the cool metal of the gun in reassurance.

As they pulled away Steve stood and watched, hand gripping his bat tightly and a deep frown marring his smooth face. Allison could read

the worry in his eyes all the way down the driveway until they turned, taking Steve and the Byers house from sight.

## 12. Sunday II

OMFG Hi!

50 follows and nearly 28 likes, you guys are amazing! I love the shit outta all of you 3

How cute was that little teaser for season 3!? I have so many feels about why in the hell Steve was working in an ice creamery, rather than... IDK I don't know what Steve should be doing, I only have my own ideas of other peoples ideas.

Sorry for the late update, I moved house last week, super happy about the new house, super stressed about the move. You probably won't see me around for another month but I promise I'm nearly done, the next chapter will be HUGE and then max 2 chapters after that. Enjoy! also give the song I've put in here a listen, it's a proper banger.

Guest: Thank you! The support means so much, honestly!

thesameoldfearsx: Thanks hun, My biggest fear is always making Allison and Daniel seem useless or uninteresting, they are both important and I wanted the strong voices they hold to be heard. Also, it always irks me when you read an OC story and the characters add literally nothing then get to kiss the cute boy... *Looking at you Stiles fandom...*

*Coming up for air and it's hard not to care*

*I need something to make me feel nothing,  
I know the ending, I know that it's coming*

*Make Me Feel Nothing - Bell City Square*

**Sunday**

"Why is she here?" Eleven asked flatly, inspecting the pretty girl in the back seat with an emotionless expression. Eleven had watched the older girl rifle through her bag and smile just a few moments before as she pulled out a small black machine and a pair of headphones similar to the pair Mike had. The older girl placed the

headphones on and rolled her eyes at the song, a small smile lighting her features.

Eleven couldn't figure out why this girl was with them, she didn't have a power or a number, she wasn't with them when they faced the Demogorgon last year. Hopper said her name was Allison. She was pretty, or at least Eleven thought so; they had the same hair but hers fell down her back, knotty and wind-torn. She thinks the boy with the crazy hair thought Allison was pretty too, he was sad when she walked away. Blue eyes met watchful brown in the mirror, the older girl couldn't help but feel slightly unnerved by the younger girl.

"Allison's dad works at the Lab, he stayed behind so we could escape before." Allison's eyes fell to her lap at Hopper's gentle tone. "She wants to make sure he's okay."

"Her Papa?" the curly haired girl asks, penetrative gaze still watching the girl in the mirror. Hopper nodded and Eleven finally looked away from the older girl, hard gaze cutting to the man beside her. "Bad?" was all she said, and Allison tensed, her blue eyes watching the back of Hopper carefully.

"No."

Allison turned the volume up and let the cassette continue where Daniel had stopped it. She couldn't help the derisive snort when the jaunty music of *never going back again* invaded her ears. The irony was not lost on her, neither was the conversation only a few days previous when Allison asked her brother if he'd seen her favourite album and he had stated in an annoyed voice that he would never touch a *Fleetwood Mac* album.

*You don't know what it means to win  
Come round and see me again*

Been down one time  
Been down two times  
I'm never going back again

From the outside, Hawkins Laboratories looked exactly as it had earlier that night. Allison noted the dark foreboding building, the

open front gate, and most upsetting of all the mostly full carpark. Hopper and Allison's eyes met in the mirror realising at the same time that it was becoming less likely that anyone survived.

"Don't put that gun down, you got that?" Hooper orders when he pulls the truck to a stop. Allison nods, gripping the cold metal tightly in one hand and shouldering her bag with the other. "In and out alright? I don't want you to come for us, the second you find your dad get somewhere safe." Opening her mouth to argue, Hopper shook his head eyes meeting hers in the mirror, "Trust me, you'll just be a distraction and El can't afford it."

The younger girls charcoal ringed eyes met the blue ones in the back seat and she nods her head once. Allison averts her gaze, accepting the Sheriffs warning. "I'm gonna make my way up I think, it's what I'd do if I couldn't escape the building. Maybe my Dad thought the same." Allison decides, her eyes finding the top of the building before her.

With a sigh, Hopper glanced at Eleven one more time before opening his door and coming around to her side, letting both girls out, a deep frown on his face. "You ready, kid?" He asked Eleven who nodded, determination written all over her face. He turned to Allison, "Don't make me regret bringing you, stay sharp and move smart. If you hear something, wait, don't call out or run. If you run into one of those monsters put it down and leave, the noise will attract more of them." Allison nodded, adjusting her bag, and tightening her grip on the gun.

"I'll code on the walkie the second I'm out," Allison reassured purpose hardening her features. She could do this, her heart pounded in her chest and her ankle throbbed painfully, but she ignored both, she could feel her adrenaline pumping through her as her reality set in, she was doing this, alone, but she didn't feel scared, she just felt ready. She was ready. "Let's do this."

Emergency lights were useless. Allison learned that quickly as she strolled the empty hallways of the fifth level. The low light had been a blessing when the three of them had separated in the lobby, eyes purposely avoiding the shredded corpse to the right. Hopper and Eleven had taken the stairs and Allison had taken the elevator

deciding to start her search on the floor that contained her Father's office and the laboratories.

Allison thought it was a little strange that her Father worked on the level that dealt mostly with chemistry. Her father was a geneticist, or at least that's what the placard on the wall beside the elevator had said, *Richard Edwards, geneticist- level supervisor*. Allison couldn't claim a deep understanding of science of any kind, but Richard Edwards didn't seem to be the right person to be looking over a bunch of chemists.

Wondering again what her Father had gotten himself into she wandered down the hall before her. Allison couldn't help but think about the time she had gone to her father for help with her biology homework in ninth grade and he had flipped through the page with an amused chuckle, *"I might have to tag your Mom in on this one, Kiddo, understanding how Humans work has never been my forte."*

The few lights that worked were dimmed and flickered over and over, lighting the darkest corners for just a second before plunging back into an uncomfortable blackness. It was silent except for the hum of electricity flowing above, spotting a dark wood door at the end of the hall, Allison tightened her grip around her gun and pressed forward, eyes darting from one door to the next, shoulders pushed up to her ears in anticipation.

The door had her Father's name engraved into a gold plaque on the door, pushing it open gently, Allison slipped inside silently, closing it behind her. Richard had left the curtains open allowing the soft glow of the moon to penetrate the room. Relaxing slightly, Allison lowered her weapon observing the picture frames that lined the walls of her Father's office. She could make out certificates interspersed between the photos of Richard Edwards holding awards or smiling beside various older men. In some he wore a nice suit, in others he wore a lab coat.

The largest photo sat in the middle of all of them, it was a photo of Richard Edwards shaking hands with Ronald Regan, a large smile on both men's faces, Allison thought it had been taken in the White House but couldn't ever recall him mentioning a trip to Washington. Her family had always known that he worked for the government but



a photo with the President? She really didn't know her Father at all.

Turning away in frustration, Allison made her way to the desk sitting in the middle of the room. It was obvious to her that her Father hadn't been here since before the Demodogs attacked. Pulling the heavy wooden drawers open she found nothing but blank pages and ballpoint pens. No weapons. No car keys. No proof of a man with too many secrets. Allison wondered if it was possible that this was a fake office, it made sense that he would have somewhere away from the secrets of the underground to conduct business.

The room they had spoken in earlier must be his actual office she surmised, sighing in frustration Allison pushed away from the desk. Hopper would kill her if she went anywhere near that room. Glancing over the tabletop in suspicion, Allison thought back to Doctor Owens and his recognition of the Daniels children. A plaque, an empty pad, and a single blue pen, not a picture in sight.

Frustrated but feeling the need for the truth she decided to stick to her original plan, Allison looked over the room once more before exiting into the sterile hallways once again. If she couldn't find her Dad perhaps she could find other survivors who could tell her what was going on in this building and why her Father was meeting with the President in his free time.

She was only meters from the silver doors of the elevator when she heard it, the deep animalistic growl that had haunted her since this nightmare had begun. She felt the grumbles in her bones and tossed her head from side to side, unsure where it came from. When the sound echoed down the hall again she nearly missed it, the harsh expel of her own breaths almost drowning them out. A dark shape crawled in front of the elevator with a snarl, its mouth opening viciously to reveal its rows of teeth. With a shaky breath, Allison took a step backwards, eyes never leaving the Demodog that watched her immobile, waiting for her move.

"Shit."

Allison and the creature were at an impasse; it seemed to be waiting for her to make the first move, sensing her shaking fists and pounding heart. Raising the gun slowly with shaky hands, Allison felt

her heartbeat triple, blood rushing into her ears and plunging her into a frightening moment of silence. Taking a deep breath, she fired. The sound was louder than she could have ever anticipated, the brunette temporarily lost balance at the ringing in her ears and the torque from the small gun in her hands. The bullet sliced into the left leg of the monster ahead of her causing a deep rumbling growl from the creature before it pounced in anger.

Pulling the trigger again, Allison watched in horror as the creature whined at the impact of a second bullet, this time causing blood to splatter from its middle. It continued on, flowered mouth opened and razor-sharp teeth pulsating as its body lunged again. She braced and squeezed the trigger again and again until the ear-shattering bangs turned to empty clicks. Still, the bleeding creature came, blood dripping onto the floor behind it. Throwing the gun in frustration Allison dove to the right of the hallway at the precise moment the dog closed its mouth over where her head had just been. Allison lost her balance, crashing through the white door she landed on.

Scrambling to her feet, Allison threw herself behind a tall workbench, covering her mouth with her hand in an attempt to quiet her gasps. She cursed to herself when she realised she couldn't see the door and pushed herself onto her hands and knees, crawling to the corner. Her hunter was silent, Allison couldn't tell if it had followed her or if it still sat outside. Glancing around the dark lab she noticed that like her Father's dummy office it was pristine and empty. The shelving she leaned against under the bench was bare and clean, the tabletops as well. Allison could see a chemical unit a few feet in front of her that was locked, it was also empty.

Bunsen burners lined the back wall and Allison made a gut decision. If she could turn them on, she would have the perfect distraction. The gunshots from minutes before would bring more Demo-dogs to hunt her but a fire, something she could use as a weapon now that she was defenceless it could also be her perfect getaway. Swallowing down the lump in her throat she stood, slowly and silently edging to the back of the large lab.

The hose to the burner was connected already much to the brunette's relief. She closed the collar on the burner and flicked the gas switch underneath the white table top. Nothing happened. With a silent

inhale, Allison ripped the hose from the base realizing no gas was coming out. It was fake just like the rest of the room, just like she was starting to suspect, the rest of this entire building. It was a front, anything a Hawkins resident could see was a lie.

Frustration mounted in her, why was this happening? She could hear the scrape of the monster's feet as it moved closer and panic set in. Allison was defenceless, she'd wasted her bullets and now she was trapped inside a moon-lit display room with one exit. A tear cascaded down her cheek as she leaned against the bench, her head resting on her raised knees. Allison cursed her obnoxious curiosity; if she had of just kept her nose out of this if she had of just stayed in the car when Steve and Dustin told her too, she could be home safe with her Mom and Daniel. Instead, she had put them both in danger and she was about to get ripped apart by monsters.

Growls vibrated down the hall and she whimpered, hugging her knees tightly. She thought of Daniel again, his little face had been so worried, she had promised she wouldn't be stupid and here she was. Gripping the straps of her brothers bag tightly Allison felt her resolve harden, wiping her face she scowled at the scratches of the approaching creatures.

She was trapped in this sterilized room and she wasn't going down without a fight. Stomping to the centre of the room, Allison watched as three Demo-dogs stalked into the room, growling as they surrounded her. "I could probably think of a cool line from *Terminator* or something if I had paid attention to the movie, I'll just go with a wicked classic: You sons of bitches wanna fight, let's fight" She growled, fisting her shaking hands in front of her.

Guilt filled briefly as she thought of her friends, she had promised she would be careful, that she'd come back and as she watched the monsters tear toward her, she realised she'd lied. Frustration and anger force the brunette's hands out in front of her and she screams. Allison screams so loud she can feel the ground move beneath her. She feels an unbearable heat surrounding her, masking her face as she closes her eyes and tucks her head into her shoulder seconds before the world burns.

## 13. Sunday II Part 2

Heyyyy, Bit of filler in the lead up the the final parts. I love this story so much but in writing it I have discovered writing with tension is not something I'm terribly good at so if anyone has any tips please feel free to share. Anyway enjoy! Thank you to everyone who has liked, followed, and reviewed it gives me butterflies every time I get a notification.

*Honey, it's no secret that I've been losing my way  
In the weirdest of moments and the stupidest of ways  
But hey, I'm still young and it's gonna be okay  
I got solipsism, baby, and I brought lemonade.*

*Let me down Easy - Gang of Youths*

*"Allison! Come in Allison, Over."*

*"Alli, we need you, Alli are you there? Over."*

*"Allison, Steve's really hurt! Max is driving us to set the centre of the tunnels on fire. We need you! Over."*

Her eyes burned the first time she opened them, the world around her swam as she blinked slowly groaning at the pain that quickly moved through her. The dull ringing in her ears forced her hand up to check her left ear with a moan, her fingers coming away wet with blood. Slowly her vision cleared, and she pushed herself up with a pained cry, leaning on the charred wall she had hit and subsequently crumpled against.

Frowning at the wreckage that surrounded her, Allison tried to put the pieces together, her brain still reeling from being tossed across the room. What was once a sterile, white lab was now covered in the charred remains of the explosion. Black smoke curled into the air from the small fires that surrounded her, the desk that had stood in the corner had disintegrated, the white table tops were black and strewn across the room. Debris buried into the walls and fractured ceiling from the pressure of the explosion and in the very centre of the room, Allison spotted the remains of the three monsters that had

tried to hunt her down.

She didn't know how the explosion had started but somehow, she was lucky enough to escape severe damage. She had been standing just a few meters from the Demodogs unarmed, she remembered the gun had run out of bullets long ago and she had discarded it in a rage. She'd been sure she was going to die when the entire room seemed to combust, she should be deep fried just like the dogs were. Her eyes found the back bench and she frowned in confusion, the gas couldn't have done this, could it? She had been so sure it wasn't working. Groaning again, Allison pushed herself to her feet, using the wall behind her for support. The damage her ankle had suffered earlier had intensified, she must've hurt it when she landed. Allison's entire left side throbbed like a fresh bruise, tentatively she touched her temple and drew her fingers back quickly with a hiss.

The blood on her fingers was fresh and she cursed, she remembered when Daniel was little, and he split his forehead on the flying fox at the playground down the road from there old house in Wakeford. The cut was barely a centimetre long but soaked the entire right side of his face in seconds. Carefully she used her sleeve to wipe down her face, bringing her cloth covered hand down to her neck where she could feel a few droplets travelling now that she was vertical. "Shit. I loved this jumper." She muttered to herself, rolling the once yellow sleeve up with a sigh.

*"Allison! You need to tell us know what's going on? Daniel is freaking out! Steve's unconscious and we need you to meet us at the pumpkin patch, so we can help end this. Just... can you please tell us you're okay? Over."*

Allison jumped in surprise at Lucas' voice, nearly collapsing when she put too much pressure on her left foot. Crying out in pain, Allison's hands pushed against the wall as her eyes zeroed in on the navy backpack protected behind an overturned lab desk. She hobbled over to it quickly, her jaw set and clutching her left side the pain in her body fell down the list of her worries. She ran over the kid's words with a worried frown, Steve was hurt? They were meant to stay at the Byers house how could he be hurt? Ripping the bag open she pulled out the somehow still intact walkie and pressed the button,

"Lucas? What's happened? Where is Steve? Are you all okay? Over."

She forced out, shouldering the bag, and making her way toward the exit. It's silent on the end for all of three seconds before Lucas' relieved voice bursts through the black walkie.

*"Alli! You're okay! We were starting to get worried. Over."* Allison heard grunting and then a moment of silence as the walkie switched hands and Dustin shouted down the line.

*"Alli! Are you okay? Over."*

"I'm fine, Squirt. Are you all okay? What happened to Steve?" Allison pressed, using her back to push the door open, the hallway before her was dark and deserted, she decided to head back to the main lab, maybe she could meet up with Hopper and Eleven and regroup, Allison remembered Hopper telling her to stay away but she wondered if Hopper would stick with that when he sees her covered in blood and soot. Reaching the end of the hall, Allison leaned against the wall checking both directions before continuing. The cleanliness of this section had been a respite on the way up, now it freaked her out, she had just blown up a room; the white seemed wrong and even in the darkness was really hurting her eyes.

*"Max's brother beat the crap out of him."* Dustin supplied in a rushed voice, she heard Dustin yelling at someone to watch where they were going before he continued. *"We patched him up and now we're on our way to the pumpkin patch, Alli we think if we set fire to the centre we'll be able to help the Chief and El by distracting the Demodogs. Where on our way now but we need your help. Over."*

Allison sighed, leaning her mouth against the walkie she stopped in the dark hallway conflicted. The plan was a strong one, attack to draw attention. The dogs had a hive mind, the risk they were taking was huge. Hesitating Allison remembered her mission, Her Dad was still missing. She needed more time to track him down.

Her heart pounded, and guilt flooded through her at the realisation of what she had to do, Allison knew what her Father would want her to do but she still wavered. "It's my fault. Shit, shit, shit!" the walkie landed against her thigh as her hand fell to her side. She needed to help the kids, she needed to protect Daniel. If Steve was hurt, it meant they were unprotected and about to bring hundreds of demo-

dogs to their location. Breathing deep, and pushing a hand through her matted hair, Allison pressed the button on the side of the walkie, her decision made.

"Give me directions, I'm coming."

Dustin gave her what she needed and told her to hurry, they were already on their way. Allison jogged to the stairs pushing the door open and making her way up. She decided to head up to the top floor considering it her best chance of finding what she needed. Out of breath and stumbling, Allison made it to the top floor, opening the door quietly she took in the crimson stains marking the wall opposite. A man sat slumped on the floor, his chest a mess of ripped flesh. Allison quickly averted her gaze with a choked sob when she saw what she thought was his stomach begin to slip from his middle, leaking a yellow liquid as it went.

Swallowing down the bile that rose in her throat, Allison continued as silently as she could. Her heart pounded in her chest as she made it into the first room and closed the door behind her with a relieved sigh. The office was furnished with neutral tans and browns, it was probably once clean and professional like all the other rooms in the building, but now everything was overturned or destroyed. Blood soaked patches of the beige carpet and Allison stepped over them slowly, never removing her eyes from the solid desk. Her view of behind obstructed, Allison circled it slowly freezing in her tracks at the sight before her.

A man in what was once a white lab coat lay motionless on the floor, his head leaning uncomfortably on the wall. He had been bitten in several places but none, Allison thought, were bad enough to kill him. Beside him was the bisected carcass of a Demodog, its dark insides spilt from each end. The man's still hand clasped the handle of a large knife. Allison had never seen a blade like it before, the handle was dark and thick leading into a fat curved blade that rested in a puddle of blood. That was then she noticed the man's wrists. One clean slice across each, deep into the flesh. The disrupted arteries had long stopped pumping the man's life on to the floor. He killed himself.

Swallowing her tears, she realised she understood his decision. He

knew he was going to die no matter what and had taken his life into his own hands. Kneeling down carefully Allison noted a large wooden stand that had been ripped from the wall beside him, he had his blade on display a plaque on the wood read,

*You are one crazy son of a bitch.*

*From,*

*The guy who will never cross you again.*

Gently she leaned over and closed the man's dark eyes with a compassionate sigh. Tugging the knife from his grip and wrapping her fingers around it securely she rose, swinging the blade to the side quickly. The biggest knife she had ever handled was a bread knife, but she felt comfortable with it in her hands and she moved forward with purpose, rifling through the desk and exhaling happily when she found what she was looking for. The car keys jangled from her fingers and she smiled triumphantly, pocketing them, and rushing to the exit.

She decided to use the elevator, the kids and Steve would be getting close to where they agreed to meet, and she didn't want them waiting in the open for her. Allison couldn't help but think of the man upstairs again and wondered if anyone else had made the same choice. Would her Father do something like that? She shook her head to expel the thought, no, her Dad was strong and smart, he would figure something else out before it got to that.

The lobby was dark and for that Allison was grateful, she averted her gaze from the pieces of Bob and rushed to the door, pushing it open and rushing to the car park. She sent a silent thank you to the man upstairs who had a tag attached to his key with the car's registration number and quickly tracked down a plain looking, brown station wagon, remarkably similar to her Dad's.

Turning back to the Lab one last time, Allison wavered. Despite the lies and the deceit and the pain he had caused her, despite his involvement in whatever happened to Eleven, Allison wanted to save him. She failed. "I'm so sorry Dad, I tried so h-h-ard." She sniffled, turning toward the car, she would not look back. "I hope you can



forgive me."

The moment she leaves the gates of the lab behind her, her brother's staticky voice fills the car, "*Alli, it's Daniel, where only a few minutes away. Over.*"

His hurried voice makes her jump, Allison pulls the walkie from her bag without taking her eyes off the road. It's dark ahead of her as she leaves the lights of the Lab behind her. The panic in Daniel's voice fortifies her choice to leave, his young voice sounding panicked and scared. She can feel her adrenaline coursing through her body and can't help but wonder how much more of this she can take. Adrenaline seems more like a one per capita type deal, she felt like she was on her fifth wind. "Daniel! Are you okay?" Allison replies, shaking her head at her own thoughts.

"*You didn't say over. Over.*" Daniel replies.

"Over. Over." Allison says sarcastically, a small smile crawling onto her face for the first time in a while.

"*Much better. I'm fine, it's Steve who's looking a little rough. Dustin patched him up, he's okay, I think. Over.*"

Allison sighs, concern for her friend swirling in her stomach. "I'm nearly there. Explain everything to me in a minute. Over."

The drive to the pumpkin patch was only a few minutes but it felt like forever, her hands gripped the steering wheel tightly as she hit a hard-left into a paddock and spotting what she thought was Billy's car parked up ahead. Skidding to a stop the brunette pushed herself from the car with a small grunt, her right hand gripping her left side as she rushed over the other car, the kids unloading and grabbing supplies from the boot of the Camaro.

"Allison!" Daniel shouted, dropping his bag to the floor and launching himself at his sister in relief, his small arms wrapping around her torso tightly. Allison grunts in pain but squeezes back just as tight, resting her chin on her brother's sandy head. "You're hurt!" He exclaims loudly drawing a concerned look from the others.

"I'm fine, I'll get patched up once this is all done. What's going on?" Allison forced a grim smile, "What are we doing here? What happened to Steve?" She asks watching her friend pull himself from the back seat and rest against the inside of the door with a grimace.

"We think that if we set fire to the centre of the tunnels we can distract the Demodogs long enough for Eleven to close the gate. We were all talking at Will's house when Billy turned up looking for Max. Steve got in a fight with him, Billy was gonna hurt Lucas and Steve stopped him but it... it didn't go well." Daniel rushed out, leading his sister over to the blue car hurriedly.

"Shit. Are you okay, Kiddo? Billy didn't touch you, did he?" Allison asks her brother concerned, her eyes running over his face for injuries. Daniel shook his head, a sigh of relief escaping his sister's lips. "What happened at the lab? Where's Dad?" Daniel frowns, glancing over Allison's shoulder to the car hoping to spot Richard.

"I couldn't find him, but Hopper wouldn't let me go to the lower levels so maybe he had some luck." Allison smiled reassuringly. "We don't need to worry about Dad," Allison tried to settle her worried brother, and herself. "He knows what he's doing." Allison glances up the Camaro watching Dustin walk to the boot. Steve tumbling out not long after.

"We are not going down there right now! Hey, I made myself clear!" She hears Steve shout, a concerning slur in his speech that makes her want to stick her fingers in his mouth to check that all his teeth are still in place. That's probably not a normal thought to have, Allison, muses to herself. "Hey, there is no chance we are going down that hole, this ends right now!" Steve roars, ripping Dustin's bag from his hands and throwing it back into the boot. Dustin watches his friend with sorrowful eyes through his blue goggles but stands firm.

"Steve!" the curly haired boy bellows back through his bandana, "You're upset I get it, but the bottom line is, a party member requires assistance and it is our duty to provide that assistance." Steve sighs watching the boy with a frustrated frown as he moves back to the boot and grabs a bag. His nailed bat pokes from the top, the shiny nails glinting in the moonlight. "Now, I know you promised Nance you would keep us safe, so, keep us safe."

Sighing again and with a shake of his head, the older boy takes the bag from Dustin. Accepting a scarf and goggles next. "Steve!" He jolted at his name, the sweet-sounding voice is familiar and soothing, and he would've relaxed if he wasn't busy trying to stop his shitheads from trying to kill themselves. Allison is finally close enough to see the damage Billy had bestowed upon her friend and she winces in sympathy. "Jesus Christ, I leave you alone for an hour and I come back to you looking like a *gremlin* after midnight," Allison exclaims, examining the colourful band-aids placed all over his face. Her fingers gently probe his bruised under-eye and he winces.

"Alli?"

"Hey Harrington, heard you got yourself into some trouble?" She murmurs gently, His hair is a mess, falling into his eyes so she pushes it all from his face carefully, arranging it back into some semblance of his normalcy. she's surprised it's so soft after the chemical baths and long weekend it had endured. Allison had caught sight of herself in the mirrored glass in the elevator down, she looked like she had been brutally murdered and then resurrected in the *Lazarus Pit*, she also felt that description wasn't too far off how she felt on in the inside too, meanwhile despite the bruising, Steve still looked and smelled great, the bastard.

"I'm glad you're okay, Alli," Dustin speaks up from beside her, handing her a scarf similar to his and a pair of red goggles. "You too, Squirt." She returns with a comforting smile. He passes Daniel his bag and slams the boot the two heading toward the hole and leaving the older teens to follow.

"What's going on? Did you find your Dad?" Steve asks tying his red scarf over his face gently then helping Allison with hers. Avoiding her worried blue gaze as his bruised face inched closer. "I guess the kids radioed you while I was out."

Allison thanked him when he had covered her mouth securely and placed her goggles on, careful to avoid the cut in her hairline. Steve picked his bag up off the floor and swung it over his shoulder, the two hurrying to join the others. "I'll tell you about it all later, yeah they said Billy beat the shit outta ya, Harrington. I hope you gave as good as you got." Steve huffed a laugh and shook his head miserably.

"I wish, once he got me over the head with the plate it was over."

"Jesus Christ."

"Yeah," Steve replied, rubbing the back of his head carefully. He squinted at her, zeroing in on the frightening amount of blood that coated her clothing. "You are covered in way more blood than I remember you being covered in before. Are you okay?" Allison nods, adjusting her hair to ensure the cut on her forehead was covered. She was worried if Steve saw it he would do something crazy, like leave her in the car.

"Yeah it's mostly other peoples," She evades.

"Mostly?"

"Yeah, mostly."

The pair had both stopped a few feet from the hole the party was now jumping into, locked in a stare-off that Allison was incapable of losing, she may have only known Steve Harrington for a week, but she knew him very well. He would throw her his best puppy-dog look and when that didn't work he'd huff and let her have her way. Sure enough, a second later his chocolate eyes widened as he ran them over her face in concern before looking away with a sigh. "Okay, let's go." Allison grinned at his back, tugging his bat lightly.

"I see the kids brought *Annie Oakley*."

"Who?" Steve frowned,

"The Bat."

Steve shook his head at the brunette, a small smile touching his lips underneath his scarf. "Its name is not *Annie Oakley*."

"*Barbra Gordon*?"

"No."

"*Debby Harry*?"

Steve breaths deep, pinching his nose lightly, wincing slightly when he realised his mistake.

"Sarah Jane Smith?"

"You watch Doctor Who?"

"Jane Fonda!" Allison cried in support.

"The lady in the spandex? My Mom has her videos." Steve frowns wondering if the girl beside him is mentally sound as he watches her tsk at him with a grin, her blue eyes sparkling in the moonlight even through her ridiculous goggles. He can't see her dimple but he knows it's there and he can't help himself from smiling, even in the worst moments she's able to keep him calm. He's noticing that's a pattern for them.

"Jane Fonda is one of the most feminist women alive, Steve. She's big time, dude. What do they teach you at school?" She rages her hands in the air. Steve smirks at the girl with a roll of his eyes and nudges her forward with his elbow. "Not the important things apparently, a list of the most bad-ass women in history hasn't made the cut yet."

The kids had already jumped into the hole and stood within sight, gathered around a crudely drawn map. Seeing them huddled together instantly sobers the mood between the pair. "Let me go down first and I'll help you down, you shouldn't be landing on your ankle," Steve says softly, pulling himself into the hole quickly before reaching up to her with determined eyes. If only he knew, Allison thinks as she sits on the edge and slides down carefully. Steve's hands grab her hips and guide her down, Allison sighs in relief when her feet touch the dirt, thankful he hadn't grabbed her a few inches higher.

Pulling her new knife from her backpack Allison turned to the kids who were still huddled together arguing. "Woah," Daniel says stunned, the glint of the moon on the metal catching his eye. "Where did you get that?" All five of them and Steve watched her stunned as she brought the knife up to the light.

"I borrowed it."

"You borrowed it?" Dustin scoffs, separating from the group and moving toward the left end of the tunnel. Allison looked around her with a gulp, the dark tunnel before her curved and frightening. "Holy shit." She whispered, wrapping an arm around Daniel's shoulders protectively, previous jokes dying on her lips.

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure it's this way!" Mike shouts standing ahead of the others, his yellow gloves gripping a crudely drawn map tight.

"You're pretty sure or you're sure." Dust shouts back sarcastically.

"I'm 100% sure! Just follow me and you'll know!" Mike shouts back, exasperated, before turning away and heading forward only to be stopped quickly by Steve.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa! Hey, hey, hey! I don't think so, any of you little shits die down here, I'm getting the blame." Steve says strutting toward Mike, his flashlight directly the black-haired kids' eyes. "You got it, Dipshit?" Allison can imagine the eye roll Mike gives the older boy behind his goggles, but he says nothing.

Steve turns to them with an air of authority, "From here on out, I'm leading the way, c'mon let's go!" He orders, walking away quickly and forcing the others to follow. "A little hustle!" Steve's voice echoes through the tunnel and the kids rush to catch up.

"His authority is going to go straight to his head, isn't it?" Max grumbles, watching ahead as the boys sprint to follow the leader in all his red-scarfed glory. Allison snorts in amusement, "Kid, his sense of superiority is what he styles his hair with." Max bursts into laughter, Daniel joining in and earning a glance from Steve. Allison can see his forehead crinkled in confusion and grins behind her scarf.

Mike turned toward Allison waving the map around as he gestured. "We don't have time for jokes! Eleven only gets one shot at this, we need to move."

"Into the belly of the beast we go." Allison sighs, her smile falling away as silence falls over the group. Gripping her knife, a little harder she nudges Daniel and Max forward, checking behind her for any threats. Her long night just got much longer.

## 14. Sunday II Part 3

**Hi, again.**

**I'd favourite and follow you all, thank you for sticking with me.**

*Hot and cold, young and old  
All the more I know, the less I feel right  
I'm high and I'm low, no control  
Everything's looking peach now*

*Peach - Broods*

Allison's ribs were burning, her head was pounding, and she's pretty sure her ankle was broken or dislocated. She actually didn't understand how she was upright as she trekked through the ribbed tunnels bringing up the rear with her machete as Dustin had told her it was called. Everyone was dead silent as Steve directed them forward, the only sounds were the heavy breathing at the brutal pace the leader was keeping and the eerie whistling and rumbling of the underground network that seemed to shake Allison's very bones. The unusual white substance that had burst from the hole at the lab floated around them now, lazy in its journey and making her infinitely more grateful for the mask and scarf she had been outfitted with. Allison wasn't keen to learn what that stuff would do if it got inside her.

As they reached another crossroads, Steve took a left, worryingly sure on his movements. She had seen the 'map' he had taken from Mike, crude scribbles in blue crayon. The last thing she needed was to get stuck down here and trapped forever with five middle-schoolers and Steve Harrington, if she was getting trapped somewhere forever it would be somewhere cool like the Parisian Catacombs or the spaceship from *Alien*; actually, definitely the spaceship, *Ripley* was her girl crush.

Dustin tripped up ahead and began screaming, pulling her out of her thoughts as everyone rushed toward him in fear. "It's in my mouth! Some got in my mouth! Shit!" The falsetto on this kid was incredible, Allison thought as Dustin decided he was okay, much to everyone's annoyance. "Sorry," He muttered sheepishly to Allison who wrapped

an arm around his shoulders with a shake of her head.

"Go on, we can't have much longer now," Allison replied, nudging him forward. She was right, only a few minutes later, the group stopped. "Is this it?" Allison frowned, looking around at what surrounded them, more of the same. A giant crossroads with something strange rising up in the middle. This couldn't be it, then she felt it, the pulsing of something alive, surrounding her. Goosebumps rose over her skin and she shivered at the echoed growls that surround them. "Let's hurry up and get out of here."

"All right, Wheeler. I think we found your hub." Steve grunts, folding up the map and tucking it into the front pocket of his jeans. Allison stood back, her hand finding Daniel's shoulder and giving it a gentle squeeze.

"Drench it."

It didn't take long for Steve to work his way back to the group that had huddled safely in the tunnel waiting for him after they doused every part of the centre they could reach. The whole time they had been working the weird pocket hissed and pulsed at them like it knew exactly what they had planned. "Ready?" Steve asked making eye contact with everyone before nodding and igniting the lighter. The fire engulfed everything in its sight, bringing a warm glow that would have been comforting if a soul-shattering screech hadn't of shattered her eardrums seconds later. The vines that had previously lay dormant flailed as they burned. "Let's go, let's go, let's go!" Steve cried, and they all turned away from the burning centre. It didn't take long for all hell to break loose.

Her lungs were scorching but she knew she couldn't dare stop. If she'd thought the pain in her ankle was unbearable before, sprinting on the uneven packed earth beneath her made the pain blinding. She tried to ignore it, pressing on and dragging Daniel by his wrist behind her. "Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Oh, my God!" Dustin cried as he skipped over the ridges in the floor as quickly as he could.

"Hey, this way!" Steve screams, glancing over his map quickly before continuing on, the others following quickly behind. Mike took off right in front of her but tripped over with a surprised grunt. Before



Allison could blink, vines burst from around him and began tangling the black-haired boys' legs. He screamed for help and Allison and Steve burst into action, pushing the others away.

"Pull him out!" Allison screamed, bringing her machete down across the flailing tendril that had wrapped itself firmly around Mike's ankle with a desperate yell of force. The vine screeched as it was cut in two with one clean slice. Steve pulled Mike into his arms, helping him to his feet quickly. "Mike! Are you okay?" Allison rushes forward, grabbing the boys face quickly checking for any damage.

"I'm okay, I'm okay, thank you, Alli." He pulls her hands away and they both turn to Steve, bat in hand ordering the others to move. A loud growl sounds from behind them and they all jump turning around, Allison and Steve both with weapons at the ready. Clutching her knife in her left hand the older girl guides Daniel and Mike behind her quickly her eyes never leaving the demo-dog that stood before them, roaring as its flower mouth opened and its teeth flexed threateningly.

"I've killed quite a few of your brothers and sisters tonight, wastoid, come a little closer and I'll happily show you how this son of a bitch works," Allison growls readjusting her grip, her menacing knife glinting in the minimal light.

"Wait!" Dustin exclaimed quietly, "Dart?" He asked with wide eyes, taking a hesitant step forward. Everyone tried to grab him with whispers of no, but the curly haired boy pressed on, waving them all away, "Trust me, please?" Watching with wide eyes, Allison refused to lower her weapon even as Dustin took a knee before the creature that seemed hesitant to attack. "Hey," Dustin spoke softly, pulling his floral scarf down around his neck and pushing his goggles up. A warm smile on his face directed at the creature.

"It's me, it's me. It's just your friend, it's Dustin. It's Dustin, all right? You remember me? - Will you let us pass?" The creature snarls and takes half a step forward, everyone tensing to leap forward but being pacified by Dustin's soft apology. "Okay, okay, I'm sorry. I'm sorry about the storm cellar. That was a pretty douchey thing to do." He pauses for a second before he carefully reaches for his backpack. "You hungry? Yeah?"

"He's crazy," Lucas whispers in a disbelieving tone, Steve tells him to shut up quickly, a frown marring his forehead, he could not believe what Dustin was trying to do, he couldn't believe he was standing here letting him do it, the words 'I'm totally dead' may have swum in his head a few times since he had jumped into the hole not so long ago. Those words had become a chant when he had thrown that lighter and now, they were a primal scream if they made it out of this alive... He was a dead man.

"I've got our favourite," Dustin continued, ignoring the whispering behind him. "See? Nougat. Look at that, Yummy. Here, all right? Eat up, buddy." Dustin waves a hand behind him to the others who carefully move past the boy and his chocolate eating friend. "Come on. Come on." Allison squeezes his shoulder gently as she brushes past, her eyes never leaving the monster as she walks behind Daniel and Mike. Despite the connection the two had, Allison couldn't bring herself to trust this was a good idea, under normal circumstances, she reasoned with herself, she'd never trust anything or anyone whose favourite chocolate was *Three Musketeers*.

Dustin stood carefully and walked towards his friends, turning back once to say goodbye to his Demo-dog. Grabbing his hand, she pulled him in front of her as Steve whispered that they needed to go. "You did so well, kid, I'm so proud," Allison whispered earning a wide grin from the young teen before he pulled his flower scarf back over his lips.

"Thanks, Alli."

They were close to the exit when the growling started. "What was that?" Max asked, panic lacing her voice. Allison turned toward the beginning of the tunnel they had just entered, hearing the growls growing rapidly louder, the pounding of multiple feet heading toward them.

"They're coming! Run!"

They all took off, Allison at the back pushing her brother and Dustin forward "Come on! Come on!" she screamed, her chest threatening to burst. Daniel looked behind them in fear spotting the shadows of the chasing Demodogs entering the tunnel with vicious intent. "Don't

look!" His sister screams, pushing him forward as the group picks up speed. Allison could see Steve pushing Lucas up into the hands of Max a few meters ahead and pushes her legs harder, throwing her goggles off and pulling her scarf down before reaching for Daniel's collar and pulling him along as fast as the dark uneven surface would allow.

"Steve!"

He looks up at Allison's frantic voice just in time to catch Daniel in his arms and throw him up. His eyes widen when he zeros in on the howls echoing toward them. "Get Dustin up, now!" Together they push him up watching as the kids above all bring their hands down to help the teenagers. "Go quick!" Steve shouts, grabbing the brunette under her armpits and preparing to lift.

"No, it's too late! I'm not leaving you alone." She shouts, pushing his hands away and readying her machete. Looking toward the kids in fright, all five of their little faces petrified and leaning over the hole, trying to reach out. "Get back!"

"Shit," Steve grunts, standing in front of his friend protectively. The shadows of the monsters they could hear tearing toward them became visible and the shouts above them faded as the first few Demo-dogs bolted towards them. Allison screamed in fright, turning her head away as the first monster came upon her. This was it, she was going to be torn to pieces with her closest friend by her side and her brother and his friends watched on helpless.

"Alli! Steve!"

She feels something sleek brush past her and then again and again until her eyes pop open in surprise. She watches the back of the demo-dogs disappear past her with her mouth open in shock. One smacks into her knees and she nearly goes down, but Steve is suddenly grabbing her waist, pulling her as close as possible as they both watch the herd of killers run past them. The last dog runs past and Allison Grabs onto her friends' shoulders, pulling his head into her neck with a sob. Her whole body is trembling with fear and adrenaline she can't even talk. All Allison can do it clutch her friend closer to her and try not to break down as his hands wrap around her

and press into her shoulder blades.

"I don't understand," Steve mumbled moments later, his own body quaking against Allison. It felt like an eternity they had stood together but as the ringing in her ears subsided and the shouting of Daniel and the others above came back into focus, she realised it had been mere seconds. Lifting his head from Allison's shoulder to survey the empty tunnel with a frown, he kept Allison in his arms, one hand tight around her waist while the other rested at the nape of her neck, his thumb rubbing reassuring circles behind her ear absentmindedly. "Are you okay?" He questioned quietly the shouts from above registering in his ears for the first time.

"Yeah, I think so. We should definitely be dog meat about now, right? I didn't just imagine hundreds of those bastards running toward us?" Steve feels a small smile curl his mouth as he meets his friends confused blue gaze. Allison returns his smile with a muddled one of her own, pulling back slightly to see his face a little better. Her hand travelled to her neck where it came to rest over his.

"Let's get out of here."

Steve lifted Allison gently, she had yet to tell him about her injuries but the knowing look he gave her as he pressed his hands onto her hips told her he definitely knew more than he should. She shook her head at him with a roll of her eyes and reached for the rope, Max and Mike helping to pull her up into the shelf of dirt. "I'm never taking flat earth for granted again." She sighed as she wiggled out of the way and let the kids help Steve up.

"Alli!" Daniel exclaimed, attaching his arms around her midsection and refusing to let go. It hurt her, but she ignored it, wrapping an arm around her brother just as tightly. "What were you thinking! There was plenty of time to get you up, that was stupid! Moronic! Senseless! So many other words I can't think of right now." He raged, pulling back slightly so she could see his wide misty eyes and his wobbly chin.

"Oh, Kiddo, I'm okay. Hey, look at me." Allison grabbed his little face when he looked away, smiling reassuringly into his dark eyes. "I'm sorry, but I'm okay, nothing is gonna happen to me, I promise."

Daniel nodded, burying his head into her neck with an exhausted shuddering sigh. "I'm so proud of you Dan, you did so well. *Arnold Schwarzenegger* would be beyond proud, you were big time Kid." She whispered into his hair.

"So were you, you are my hero, Alli." He whispered back before standing and helping her to her feet. Everyone was pulling their goggles and scarves off when the headlights of Billy's car burned infinitely brighter than before, blinding them all momentarily.

Shielding her eyes with her hand, Allison felt her whole body deflate. Whatever adrenaline she had been running on in those tunnels was gone, regardless of what those blinding headlights meant, her fight was over. Legs shaking, she stepped away from the others slightly and collapsed beside the hole with a grunt, hand holding her side. As she rested her head on her knees slowly. From her spot in the dirt, she could see the lights dim and the tense shoulders of her friends relax slightly.

I think it's over." Mike whispered, and everyone exhaled in relief.

Allison wasn't expecting a small blond blur wrapping himself around her again moments later, her brother's concerned face hovering over hers. "Did you get hurt in the tunnels?" Daniel shook his head, frowning as he moved her hair from her forehead and watched her wince. He looked at her like she was crazy for worrying about him. "What? Is my forehead that big? Is it time to consider bangs?" She joked nervously, watching the young boy swallow anxiously before calling Steve over who was standing with the others talking quietly and checking for injuries. He jogged the few steps quickly, and the others followed suit.

"Hey," Steve said quietly, kneeling beside her and taking in the sight of a nasty jagged cut along the brunette's hairline. It looked about an inch long and in dire need of disinfectant and a few stitches. "What happened here, Edwards?" He questioned the flashlight in Daniel's hand highlighting the blood congealed strands of her hair and the red stains down her face.

"I may have been in a small explosion," Allison whispered, her energy depleted and leaving her struggling for any conscious thought. "At

the Lab, I got cornered by a few of those demo-dogs and I'd run out of bullets, I remember feeling really hot and thinking my head was gonna explode from how loud I was screaming and then everything around me just... exploded. It was like I exploded, Steve I swear it started from the middle of the room... The gas valves behind me must have combusted somehow." She explained, she decided to keep the information that those burners didn't work and her opposite trajectory to herself for now, until she could figure out how an explosion had started from the middle of the room.

"You were in a freaking explosion and you still came out here?" Steve exclaimed, drawing the attention of the other kids to the injured girl who had drifted off the second his hand had slid into hers. "Alright, shit, we need to get you to the Hospital, like, now." Turning behind him, Steve saw the kids watching on shocked and snapped them into gear, "Move, shit-heads! We need to go now!" The quick-thinking kids from earlier appeared again, helping Steve, who held an unconscious Allison in his arms. The last thing she remembered before everything went dark was five worried faces hovering over Steve's shoulder, if she could talk, she probably would have made a joke at how funny they all looked, heads pressed together, sprouting from his shoulders like some sort of comical chimaera.

Steve sped the whole way to the Hospital, Allison in the back with Daniel, Mike, and Dustin. Lucas and Max shared the front seat. The Sheriff stood outside the hospital talking quietly to Nancy Wheeler when the blue Camaro screamed into the parking lot and children began to pour out of it. If he'd had a moment to appreciate it, he would have laughed as they tumbled out like ten clowns in an undersized car. He probably would have administered a ticket as well.

"Mike!" Nancy shouts when she spots her brother, who runs up and grabs her wrist, yanking her toward the car. "Nancy, you have to help, it's Alli! She's really hurt!" Hopper rushed forward to check over the girl now nestled in Steve's arms, her young face covered in grime much like he and Eleven. He quickly led the way to the hospital doors cursing himself for ever being stupid enough to agree to let her into that godforsaken lab.

"Help! She's been in an accident." Steve bellowed the nurses on the

floor instantly pulling a bed into the once empty waiting room. Steve set Allison down gently, taking her hand in his grasp when he saw her eyelashes flutter. "It's gonna be okay, Alli, I promise." She didn't respond as the nurses rushed her away through a door he couldn't follow. For the third time today, they were separated, he just hoped this time garnered better results.

## 15. Monday II

... Hi ... Could you tell I'm a terrible updater? Sorry!

This is it friends, the final chapter of Can I Lay Back Into The Dark. I'm just putting the finishing touches on the epilogue and I'll have it to you soon. I wanted to say thank you to everyone who took the time to read this, whether you enjoyed it or not, it was so gratifying for me to get over my fear and put something into the world, you all made a very directionless person a more motivated and focused one and I can never thank you enough.

### THIS IS NOT THE END

I have mentioned a few times I have a sequel to this in the pipeline but I have something very special planned in the meantime. I'm excited to share it with you very soon. for now please enjoy this chapter, it's very special to me because it's a circle around to what was the most important theme for me; friendship.

*Open up your insides show us  
Your inner most lecherous  
I'll rip it out carefully  
I promise you won't feel a thing*

*Need a little time - Courtney Barnett*

Steve thought it ironic that after all was said and done, they were all sitting in the waiting room of the hospital again. Sure, this time there were a few new faces and Eleven, but it was a sick case of déjà vu. Nancy sat beside him, her eyes closed and her messy hair resting on his shoulder, every few seconds he heard the slightest snore escape her open mouth and he couldn't help but be a little amused. Dustin sat on his other side, face pointed toward the fluorescent lights above, mouth wide open, in desperate search of a fly. The rest of the kids were all squeezed beside him, they had all given up the fight for consciousness not to long ago. He understood Will had already woken up and the doctors had decided to keep him for observation, His Mom and brother were with him now, but he wasn't allowed any other visitors just yet. Will was suffering from dehydration and heat-stroke, a prognosis which confounded the doctors. Steve didn't know



how the Chief and Ms Byers had justified that in late Fall but somehow, they were walking away without too many questions.

Thinking of Hopper, Steve's eyes cut toward the window that peaked into the main corridor. He stood with Allison's mother, her small frame in loose mismatched clothes, obviously the first thing she saw in her rush underneath a giant twill coat. Her sandy hair, identical to Daniel's had been thrown into a ponytail to keep it out of her way. She had stormed into the hospital, not fifteen minutes after Steve had carried her daughter in, her jaw tight and tears filling her eyes. Steve couldn't help the stupid feelings of jealousy that coursed through his veins at the worried look in Allison's Mother's eyes. He couldn't help but wonder if his parents would even care, hell they weren't even in Hawkins right now, if something happened to him tonight would they even be reachable? As he had gotten his face patched up earlier the nurse had asked who they could contact, he quickly told them Hopper was fine. Getting his ass beat last year wasn't enough to make his parents care then, he doubted it was any different now. Besides, he was eighteen now, no one was responsible for him anymore.

Hopper had told Mrs Daniels that Allison had been at the lab visiting her father when an explosion rocketed through the chemistry labs, she had been in her Father's office and had sustained 'minor' injuries. It wouldn't take long for the whole weekend to be buried, another tragedy they were unable to talk about without fear of death.

Steve watched Hopper nod at Mrs Daniels before stepping back toward the room an exhausted look on his grizzled face. Shifting Nancy to rest against Dustin gently, Steve rose to meet the Chief, hoping for any news on his friend. "Hey, is Mrs Daniels okay?" Steve asked quietly, aware of the sleeping figures surrounding him.

"No, Allison hasn't woken up yet and she can't get in contact with her Husband." Hopper sighed, running a hand over his face. Steve cursed, pushing his hair from his face in frustration,

"Did she say what the doctors said about Allison?"

"Uh, two broken ribs, her ankle was dislocated they had to set it and she'll be in a cast for a few weeks, the doctor is still trying to understand how she was walking on it. The cut on her head needed

eight stitches but somehow no concussion, her body is just spent, and it needs to recuperate from all the trauma. She got very lucky, to be inside a room that exploded and walks away without any burns or more serious damage is a miracle, and we all know how few and far between those are." He answers gruffly.

"It's not your fault you know?" Hopper glanced up at the kid in front of him with a frown, "Allison getting hurt, hell all of this, you couldn't have stopped her from going in after her Dad. You did a great job protecting Eleven, but do you ever feel like this was all inevitable? Like no matter how far we tried to push away what happened last year, we could never escape this? ... I don't know it's stupid, I guess." Hopper squeezed the teenager's shoulder once before reaching for his hat from the table and placing it on his head with a small smile.

"You did really good today, kid. You somehow kept all those little shits from getting hurt, that is a feat not many of us could accomplish." Steve chuckled, his hand running along his jaw as he glanced at his feet embarrassed, "And hey, the same goes for you, you couldn't have stopped this either." Steve nodded crossing his arms over his chest.

"Thank you, sir."

"You showed a lot of guts today, if the kids' word is anything to go by, you have a need to protect people at any cost. That's something we need in this town because you're right, all this stuff is inevitable. Hey, you ever thought about being a cop?" Hopper queries, walking toward the door, "I think you'd be a damn good one. Get some rest Kid, you look like crap." With that he left, leaving a glowing Steve in his wake.

"Hey, any news?" Steve hears behind him, turning with a surprised jump he sees a drowsy Nancy, rubbing her eyes with one hand while she supports herself on the chair with the other. Steve shakes his head, collapsing back into his seat with a sigh.

"Edwards is still out. Hopper said she has to wear a cast on her ankle and she broke two ribs." He sighs again, leaning forward to rest his elbows on his knees. "This whole weekend has been a nightmare."

Nancy glances at Steve quickly, taking in his puckered brow and worried puppy dog eyes that stare ahead before also looking away. "I'm sorry for what I said earlier, about you being led by like a pretty face or whatever, it wasn't fair to you or Allison. I can't imagine what this weekend has been like with her Dad and instead of being a friend to her, and you, I turned on you both. I was so blinded by my hatred of that place that I was trying to see them in everything, I needed them to be behind every strange thing or every coincidence and I attached that to Alli and Daniel." Nancy glanced down at her hands clasped together tightly in her lap, "All I wanted was Justice for Barb and because of what Allison went through in trying to find her Dad, what all those people went through tonight, we may actually like have the platform to do just that."

"I'm sorry," She repeated quietly.

"Hey, hey, hey, Nance, you are one of the kindest and smartest people I've ever met, you were worried, you wouldn't be you if you weren't. I know that and I'm sure Allison knows that too." Her mouth turned up slightly in response before falling again with a sigh.

"Still." They are both silent for a moment, lost in thought. Steve worrying about his friend and Nancy thinking about her revenge. Nancy turns to Steve suddenly a moment later with a question, "So, you and Alli are really close, huh?" Steve faces his ex with a confused frown,

"Yeah, I guess, I mean, you don't really go through all the shit we've gone through and not come out of it with like some kind of friendship... I don't know, we were friends before." He stumbles, his confusion jumbling up his thoughts. "Why?"

"I was just wondering if you guys were together or if you had feelings for her, I saw you carry her into the hospital, Steve," Nancy replies, her tone free of any kind of judgment, natural curiosity colouring her voice. Steve smirks at the girl beside him before leaning back smugly.

"I'm happy that you and Jonathan are together."

Nancy chokes on her spit, "What!?"

"Edwards and I are friends, I've known her for like a week but you and Jonathan have always been more than that, I'm not as stupid as I look Nancy Wheeler."

"I never thought you were stupid, Steve." She's quiet again for a time, a small smile playing on her face. She had always been a pretty terrible liar. Breaking the comfortable silence again she spoke, "Hey, I'm sorry about the other stuff too. The stuff I said on Halloween."

Steve kept quiet this time, trying not to flinch as her hurtful words on Halloween came tumbling back. "It's okay, Nance." Instantly the girl beside him shaking her head vigorously.

"No, it's not. What I said was completely uncalled for, I didn't remember straight away. I was so mad at you because you were mad at me and then when I remembered... I was such a bitch." Nancy cleared her throat before turning her body slightly towards Steve, her eyes trying to seek his without luck. "Steven Harrington, I need you to know, you are not bullshit. You are the most surprising person I've ever met. Our relationship wasn't bullshit, I really did love you and I'm sorry that it ended the way it did."

*I really did love you* He thought it would hurt more hearing her admit she didn't love him anymore, why didn't it hurt more? "I forgive you Nance, and I'm sorry too. I know I wasn't always the best boyfriend." The teen chuckles, pushing his hair from his face and finally meeting her eyes. "I wish I'd had the balls to stand up with you for Barb when I had the chance, I'm glad you are getting justice for her." The words he had said to Dustin earlier tumbled through his head, act like you don't care; maybe that was bad advice.

"Barb wasn't your fight, protecting those kids with Allison was. It's okay."

"I can't believe she was out with us and I didn't even know she was hurt. I mean I knew; not how bad it was but I still let her come down in those tunnels with us." Steve ranted apparently back with his thoughts of Allison, much to the younger girl's amusement.

Nancy touched Steve's arm gently drawing his attention to her wide sympathetic eyes. "Steve, you and I both know Allison well enough to

know that she's as stubborn as a mule. She was never going to let you leave her behind. Let's just be thankful she's walking away with only a few injuries." He placed a hand over Nancy's and squeezed lightly before leaning back with a nod. "Hopper said before that you said she was in an explosion? What the hell happened to you guys?"

"She wasn't with us then, she said she was in a lab or something and a few demo-dogs were running at her, next thing everything exploded around her. She said..." Steve stopped with a frown.

"What?"

Steve glanced at Nancy with confused eyes, "She said it felt like it came from the middle of the room like if it came from her or something. I mean how did she walk away with no burns? If the gas burned from behind her, she should be toast right?" Nancy frowned, tapping her chin in thought.

"It's not possible for her to have just spontaneously combusted, Steve. I mean we've seen some weird stuff but to become a walking bomb? seems like a bit of a stretch, there has to be a reasonable explanation."

"You don't think that she could be like Eleven? Like maybe her Dad experimented on her?"

"Remember how a few minutes ago I said I was obsessed with the lab and finding ways to make everything about them?" She asked with a raised eyebrow.

"No."

Nancy laughed quietly, careful not to wake the still sleeping gaggle of children. "Steve, you've got a concussion, you haven't slept in like forever, once you've rested and we've talked to Allison it'll probably all explain itself. Trust me when I tell you that getting caught up on this is just going to drive you mad." Nancy placated, leaning back with a groan, before using her momentum to stand up with a stretch. Buttoning up her jacket to her neck, Nancy turns back to Steve with a small smile, "It's freezing in here, I'm going to see if I can get some blankets until I can finally get in contact with my Mom. I'll be back."

"I suppose there is probably an explanation for everything." He dismissed to himself lowly, Nancy was usually right and until he's talked to Allison about it there was no point dwelling, he tried to convince himself. watching Nancy leave he sighed again, He was exhausted, but he couldn't bring himself to leave until he'd caught a glimpse of his friend awake and okay.

The lights in her room had been turned off, but a lamp emitted a warm light throughout the space. It's what woke her up, well the light and the beeping. The continued monotonous beeping had invaded her dreams and turned a pleasant run with Melinda at school into an annoyance. The sheets on her bed were scratchy and she shifted uncomfortably, feeling an unpleasant ache hum throughout her tired body. Yeah, that made sense, she thought; I was in an explosion.

Her past few days felt like a never-ending fever dream and she couldn't shake the feeling that it wasn't over. Her last real memory was Mike saying he thought that it was all over, but she still couldn't let go of her doubt. How was a thirteen-year-old supposed to fix an alternate dimension for everyone?

Allison looked to her left noticing her Mom for the first time, her head and arms resting on the edge of Allison's bed. She had never seen her Mother so untidy before, her light hair falling from a messy ponytail, her Dad's favourite coat wrapped around her small frame tightly. Tears welled in Allison's eyes as she watched her Mother sleep, she felt the true weight of her failure at that moment.

Nudging her arm gently, Allison felt those tears spill over. "Mommy? Mommy, wake up." Her Mother woke with a start at her daughter's pained voice, her eyes watered at the sight of her daughter, bruised and defeated, she couldn't remember the last time she had seen Allison cry.

"Oh, Baby, are you okay? Let me get the doctor." Allison shook her head quickly, clutching onto her Mom's hand tightly, "Alli, Baby what's wrong?"

"I couldn't find him, Mom, I'm so sorry. I tried so hard and I couldn't find him, it's all my fault." The teenager sobbed, "I looked

everywhere, and I couldn't find Dad." Her Mother sucked in a deep breath, gripping her daughter's hand tighter.

"Allison, was your Father not with you when the explosion happened? Sheriff Hopper said you were in your Father's office when the Chem lab beside it exploded, do you remember anything else?"

Allison swallowed the lump in her throat, and looked away from her Mother's anxious eyes, "Yeah, I was in Dad's office." She lied. "I wanted to see Dad, so Dan and I thought it would be nice to bring him some dinner and while I was there, we had a fight," Allison's eyes overflowed again as she thought back on her last conversation with her Dad. "I couldn't leave it the way we did so I went back to talk to him, to clear things up, I hate fighting with him."

Her Mom nodded understandingly, her worried eyes taking in her Daughter's fingers, which gripped at the bed roughly, Allison's eyes still refusing to meet her own. "What aren't you telling me, Allison?"

"He wasn't there so I decided to wait just for a few minutes, I was gonna leave him a note if he didn't show. I was standing against the wall and everything started getting really warm, I heard this insane... boom. A second later everything got dark and that's the last thing I remember when I woke up everything hurt, and it smelled like smoke. I could barely breathe. I couldn't find him after, Mom, I looked but Daniel was outside, and I didn't know if he was okay, I chose Daniel," Allison swallowed roughly, the story was a lie, and it twisted in her stomach and made her feel ill, but the choice was not. Allison had chosen her brother over her father and now her father was missing, it was her fault. "By the time I got to Daniel, I couldn't go back in. I'm sorry, Mom, its all my fault." Allison began crying again and her Mother pulled her into a tight embrace.

"You did the right thing, Alli, I'm so proud of you. You did exactly what your Father and I would want you to do, taking care of Daniel is more important than anything else. It's not your fault, it's the labs, and they will pay."

Mary grabbed her daughter into another tight hug she thought the teenager could stand. Allison's arms banded around her Mother's torso and she finally let herself break down completely. For the first

time all weekend Allison knew she didn't have to be strong, she didn't have to pretend to be a grown-up for the younger kids, she didn't have to pretend that the horror she had seen was okay. She had seen real people torn to pieces, she had seen monsters from a twisted nightmare kill and try to kill her and her friends. She had been helpless to stop anything, that task is left to a thirteen-year-old girl who was a secret government experiment.

Her Dad was probably dead. Richard Edwards wasn't a good person. That was the one fact she had learned that clung to her. All night she had tried to force it away, Allison had pushed it away angrily trying to remind herself over and over; *He's still my Dad, I can be mad at him after I find him safe.*

Never would Allison admit to anyone ever that her decision, Dad or Daniel had been a no brainer. She would carry her guilt forever in the darkest parts of her but at the moment despite how she argued with herself the choice was simple: Daniel was innocent, Richard was not. Despite how hard she tried to forget, to be mad later, she couldn't let Richard's indiscretions go.

He didn't just know about the child torture happening in his lab, he assisted in it. He experimented on Eleven and who knows how many others in the hope of what? Allison couldn't wrap her mind around the justification of what they had done. Torturing innocent, stolen children to turn into weapons against the Russians? To make America great again? That last one gave her the chills, how far were people willing to go to restore something that wasn't broken? Richard had lied about his position in the Laboratory, had assisted in lying to the town with the fake labs and offices that were being presented in that horrible place. He had lied about too much for Allison to begin to make sense of his true ties to any of this in her current state.

Allison watched her Mother with sad eyes as they pulled away from each other, maybe it was just the drugs, but she thought she could see something in the older woman's eyes that didn't quite belong to the docile woman she knew so well. Allison had noticed something change during her story now that she thought about it. There was something in those orbs that she desperately wanted to ask about. The blue eyes so similar to her own were glazed with unshed tears and worry but beneath all that was an intensity, Allison couldn't



understand. Mary Edwards was furious, she was confused, she was calculating. Did she... know something? Something she wasn't supposed to.

Pulling her hand away, Allison cleared her throat never removing her gaze from her Mother's. She saw the brief looks of hurt and confusion before the older woman fixed a comforting smile on her face and moved her hand to her Daughter's cheek gently.

"Rest my baby, we can talk about everything in the morning properly when you are feeling up to it," Mary spoke quietly, wiping her tears with her left hand, her right still gently placed upon Allison's cheek. "I'm going to get the doctor and then I need to get your brother home to bed, will you be okay by yourself?" Allison nods, forcing a small smile to her lips as her mother rises from her seat. "Good night, Alli, I love you so much." Mary bent down to kiss her daughter's forehead gently, careful to avoid her stitches.

"I love you too, Mom." Allison smiles gently at her Mother, watching her hesitate at the door before pushing it open and closing it quietly behind her. She wanted to know what Mary knew but her brain was too foggy for her to make sense of anything. She needed to rest, her body was screaming at her and so was her mind. The journalist in her was screaming for answers, Mary Edwards was an innocent school teacher, what could she possibly know about what happened this weekend?

Allison settled back into the hospital bed as comfortably as she could against the hard mattress and let her eyes close. Could it be the drugs or the exhaustion? Allison thought she saw something, did she say something to give away her lies? No, she had been careful, even in her hazy mind she had masked the truth well. A few moments later the door opens again and a small Asian woman in pink scrubs enters, clipboard and a cup of pills in hand. Allison peels her sore eyes open tiredly watching the woman smile at her apologetically all her previous worries pushed to the back of her brain.

"Hello, Allison, how are you feeling? I'm sorry to bother your rest, I just need to check your vitals quickly." She said kindly, placing her things down on the table at the foot of her bed. "My name is Yuri and I'm one of the nurses here to help you tonight."

Yuri ran through Allison's injuries and asked her for a quick recap of what she remembered. She told Yuri the same story she had told her Mother and when she was finished her stomach ached. She wondered how long the lies would tie her stomach in knots and make her brain feel like it was about to rot in her skull.

"Get some rest, honey, you've been through a lot tonight," Yuri says with a kind smile, hanging her chart back on the end of her bed and handing her a cup of water to chase her pills. Allison's eyes instantly drooped and the last thing she remembered was the gentle click of her door as Yuri left.

"Hey."

Yuri had come in to say goodbye minutes before and let her know that visiting hours started in a few moments. Seconds after the nurse had left, she heard a tentative knock on the open door. Yuri had helped her into a sitting position before she left and that's how he found her, fingers joined nervously in her lap. Right knee partially bent and the other pin straight, a thick white wrapping from her toes to just below her knee protecting her left ankle.

Allison looked up from her knotted fingers seeing his swollen face watching her with concern. His colourful band-aids had been replaced with white butterfly bandages and the blood and dirt had been cleaned from his skin, but his wounds still looked frightening, they were a visceral reminder of the last few hours. His hair still looked good, normally that would make her smile. She itched to tease him, but she didn't even know how to open her mouth as she took him in. She wanted to crack a joke, say anything to break the tension between them, to see just a touch of happiness and humour in those soulful brown eyes of his but she couldn't think of a thing to say. For once in her life Allison Edwards didn't have a witty remark or comment, she didn't have an obscure pop culture reference or her pretty smile to hide behind. She sat bare before her friend, raw and hurting and broken; her emotions reflected back to her. A single tear fell down her cheek as she watched her friend, frozen at the old cream door.

"Hey," Her voice wobbled. It was enough for Steve to move forward settling into the seat beside her bed.

"Hey," He repeated, grasping her hand in his tightly.

"Hey."

She squeezed his hand.

They sat together for a moment a small smile gracing each of their faces. Nothing special happened in those few silent moments, her sheets were still scratchy, her lips still felt dry, her gut still clenched but for breath or two, Allison felt her mind still. Here was maybe the one person she didn't have to lie to.

Maybe it was the drugs but when she stared into Steve's eyes at that moment, brown and blue melded, no words needed to be said, she just knew they were going to be okay as long as they stuck together. He just smiled at her like he understood, squeezing her hand tighter.

Allison shifted gently, careful not to jostle her numb ribs. Her eyes found the door again as a nurse walked past quietly, her green scrubs creating a quiet swish that faded as she moved further into the artificial light. The beeping of the machines behind her created a steady rhythm that helped to settle her, she knew she would start to find them frustrating eventually but right now they added to her peace. When her eyes found Steve again, he seemed at ease for the first time since he had entered her plain eggshell coloured room, his shoulders and jaw had relaxed, as he leaned back in the burgundy chair. His eyes shone with relief. "You should totally be in bed, Harrington. Don't tell me you've been here all night."

Steve shrugged a shoulder his thumb caressing over her knuckles slowly, making her somehow even more calm. "I just wanted to make sure you were okay, Edwards, you scared the shit outta me. I left not long after your Mom did early this morning. Hopper drove me to my car out by the tracks. Did you know he lives out in a cabin in the woods?" Allison shook her head,

"That totally sounds like the beginning to a bitchin' horror movie." Steve winced at her joke and she smiled a little, "Too soon?"

"Yeah, maybe." He smiled none the less.

"I'm sorry, Steve." Allison mumbled her eyes shining with remorse. Steve shook his head gently, continuing his gentle motions on her hand.

"Hey, hey, hey. You don't have to apologise, Edwards."

"I do," Allison frowned. "I don't regret my choices, Harrington. I can't. I needed to help you and the others, and I needed to protect my Brother. I can't even regret not telling you that I was hurt because I know you would like, never have let me go with you. I am sorry though for scaring you and the kids, I never should have pushed it as far as I did, it was way harsh. I should have told you sooner than I did."

Steve is silent as he watched his friend apologise still feeling the fear and anger, he felt last night. "I carried you into this hospital, Allison. I sat around for hours terrified because I didn't know what happened to you. But when I woke up today, I understood why you did what you did, because I did the same thing." He gestures at his face with a broken grin. "I guess we're both just morons with hero complexes, huh?"

Allison chuckles lightly, taking in his bruised face again. "What's the damage?" She asked quietly, gesturing to his face.

"Mild concussion, a couple of black eyes, I'm gonna have to walk around like a weird alien wastoid for a few weeks but no lasting damage. We all got lucky, I guess."

"What about Will?" Allison asks worriedly, she had asked Yuri last night how the youngest Byers was doing but she had no updates to give. He had heat stroke is all she would say. "Is he okay?"

Steve nodded a small smile growing on his face again. "Yeah, he woke up last night. The kids are in annoying him now, Joyce is going to have fun trying to get them to leave. Your Mom and your Brother will probably be here soon too." Allison's matching smile fell from her face at the mention of her Mother.

"I think my Mom knows something about last night."

Steve frowned, leaning closer to the bed. "What? Are you sure?"

Allison nods, averting her gaze back the white blanket over her legs. "I could see it in her eyes, Steve. Like I can't explain it, but I just know she knows something about the Lab and my Dad. She didn't look very scared or shocked, she just looked... I don't know I can't describe it; calculating. It's completely wack." Allison shook her head, meeting Steve's confused gaze. "She looked completely unsurprised by what I told her like she knew what I would say. I just can't figure out if I'm going crazy, like I saw the look on her face I'm sure, but I can't make heads or tails of it. My Mom just thought it was ace that I was in an explosion...?" Her wide blue eyes search her friends for a sign that he believed her.

"I don't understand? What did she say?"

Allison shook her head at her friend patiently, "She didn't say anything, Steve. I'm telling you it was all in her eyes. One second she looked worried and thoughtful and then, for just a second something switched." Steve nodded, nibbling at his thumb as he thought, she could see his brain trying to make sense of what she was saying. "I told her about the explosion and everything in her changed."

Steve's eyes instantly found hers, wide and clear. He'd figured something out. "What is it?" Allison frowned. She knew Steve was smarter than even he gave himself credit for, but she had never seen that look on him before, he looked as if he'd figured out something she hadn't.

"Alli, do you think it's possible that your Mom is involved?"

Brow furrowing, she thought back to any memories of her Mother talking about her Father's work. Allison remembered Mary saying that Richard did important work but never expanding on that. She was an elementary school teacher, as far as Allison was aware, she had no background in science.

"Maybe, I think it's more likely that my Dad spoke to her about his work."

"Didn't you think that you had caused the explosion? You said that

you felt it came from within you. Why would your Mom have reacted to the news of the explosion?" Steve asked with a curious gaze. Allison shrugged, averting her gaze.

"I don't know what happened in that explosion, all I know is that those burners had no gas in them or nothing to ignite a flame. It all happened so quickly, I don't even really know what happened." Allison glanced back to Steve with a frown still creasing her brow. "I just have to find a good time to talk to her about it, I'm sure once we've spoken about it I can get some answers."

"Do you think your Mom will?"

"Her Mom will what?"

Mary Edwards breezed through the door, a kind smile on her face as she watched the two teens with confused eyes. "Arrive soon." Steve quickly redirected with a nervous smile, "Good morning, Mrs Edwards, how are you feeling today?" He continued politely to the older woman who smiled graciously.

"Much better now that I know my beautiful daughter is okay. How are you feeling Steve?" Her Mother's brow furrowed with concern as she approached Steve and gently brushed his cheek. "You should be home resting."

"Oh, I'm okay, Mrs Edwards, the doctors gave me the all clear last night, thank you." Steve stands, clearing his throat awkwardly, "I better go actually, my parents are due home today. I just wanted to check on Allison."

"Okay, dear. If you need anything please let me know, after everything you've done for my baby, it's the least I can do." Mary smiles sympathetically at the boy. Steve turns back toward Allison, her big eyes watching him impassively.

"I'll see you later, Edwards." He spoke carefully, still grasping her hand in his. Allison squeezed once, forcing a smile onto her face. She really wasn't ready for him to leave but she understood, he was injured too. He was also clearly uncomfortable with her Mom in the room, not knowing what role she played in all this was making

Allison uncomfortable as well.

"Go home and rest Steve, please, for me and my nerves."

Steve huffs a laugh and turns away, gently releasing her hand. He looks back and waves once before walking down the hall dejectedly. Allison watches him go with a frown her mind running a mile a second, trying to figure out what he was thinking before Mary had interrupted him.

"You look exhausted, Honey, why don't you have another little rest and I'll bring Daniel around later?" Her Mother suggested gently. Mary grabbed the remote to the hospital bed and reclined it, so Allison was laying down. Allison did feel tired and in desperate need to avoid the older woman. Her eyes closed at her Mother's suggestion. The last thing she remembered was Mary's cool hand resting against her forehead as she fell into a fitful sleep.

## 16. Epilogue

This is it for Can I lay back into the dark, thank you again to anyone who took the time to like, follow, or review this story. to anyone who took the time to read this whether you enjoyed it or not, THANK YOU! This is the first thing I've ever written that I actually finished, literally ever. I usually begin to doubt myself or lose direction but every reader here helped guide me and I can say thank you enough.

The big news I mentioned in the last chapter...!?

10 one-shots of the time between this story and the sequel that will be coming closer to the date of ST3! you will see the first one on the 17th of this month so keep an eye out for the alert I'll pop onto the end of this story in two weeks. I've already written 5 of them and I just have to say they are pretty damn cute, I can't wait to share them. I'll probably be sifting through this story at some point soon and fixing errors and such as well.

Thank you, shit-heads I love you x  
Nikki

*Innocent or guilty, will you save me if I stay?*

*See the world in color, tell me everything's okay, ooh*

*Can I lay back into the dark? (In your arms, baby, in your arms, baby)*

*Do you wanna be a hero?*

*Can I lay in your arms?*

*Can you tell me it's alright, even though I know it's not?*

*Ooh*

*Can I lay back into the dark? (In your arms, baby, in your arms, baby)*

*Hero - George Maple*

It was a week later that Hawkins Lab closed its doors for good. The Monday after Allison was released from hospital found two black cars parked out the front of the Edwards home. With shaking hands, she had descended the stairs with Daniel's help. She could hear Mary Edwards wailing before she'd even left her room. They had identified Richard Edwards from his dental records, they told her Mother, his remains had burned in an explosion on one of the upper levels; a



miscalculated amount of nitro-glycerine and an unidentified fault in the gas line during an experiment Richard was overseeing and the entire room went up in flames. Allison had long brushed off the idea that the flames had come from her. The further removed she became from the night the less that seemed like a viable reason. She had pleaded temporary insanity, she was completely normal she had reasoned, and she had a head injury. Steve had frowned when she told him what the representatives from the lab had said. They hadn't spoken about it again nor had they talked about Mary's involvement.

The men who had delivered the news to Allison's Mother had stated that her Father was a hero and that effective immediately the Lab would be closed. Indefinitely. No one questioned why Richard Edwards, a geneticist was overlooking a chemist experiment. Allison was the only one who really knew it was all strange anyway, maybe her Mom; but Mary Edwards hadn't been in the right frame of mind since the hospital.

Nancy had been over the moon, a large smile stretching from ear to ear once the news had spread of the labs shut down. Finally, she had justice for her best friend; Barbra Holland could rest in peace. The Edwards family had held a small funeral for Richard last Friday, despite the fact that no one really knew where Richard fell in the categories of good or bad. The whole party (as Dustin had taken to calling them) had watched as an empty coffin was deposited into the ground. Daniel had held Allison's left hand so tight during the proceedings that she felt her joints crack, but she refused to shake him off. Besides, her right hand had been held in Steve Harrington's and she was sure she clung with just as much force.

She had stood before that hole in the ground with an ache in her heart and a pit in her stomach. As the icy rain of Fall pelted down on them, her heart told her that it was okay to be sad, that she deserved to mourn her Father. Feeling guilty over not finding him was acceptable. Her stomach told her he was a bad man and remembering him otherwise made her as horrendous as him.

Steve had stood beside her the entire time. Nancy, Jonathan, and Melinda not too far behind. The younger teens minus Jane huddled around Daniel. Jane wasn't able to leave Hopper's house for her safety, a glance back at the grim Sheriff made Allison feel guiltier and

guiltier for missing the man that had been a part of what had happened to the girl he loved like a daughter.

Nicole was flying in for Christmas break. Her parents were disappointed to be missing her last Christmas at home but eventually, they agreed. Allison wished it wasn't something like this that brought her best friend to her, but she was delighted she would get to see her before they went to college together next year.

Steve, of course, had been her lifeline. They had spent as much time together as possible during her stint in the hospital. Her Mom was convinced they were dating. Those teasing moments were the only times she'd seen her Mom act with just a hint of normalcy, so she let it go. Allison supposed if Mary knew what they had really been through together she would understand why they were so close and why they were voluntarily hanging out with six middle-schoolers.

In the coming weeks leading to Thanksgiving, survivors guilt plagued her at every waking moment. She had resolved that not knowing if what the lab had said was the truth about her Father was for the best but as the weeks went on and she watched her Mother spiral, she wondered if she could have saved him. Did he die while she was there searching for him? Or worse did he die because she left to help Daniel, Steve, and the others? It was Hopper who finally told her to let it all go the last time she had run into him at the Byers house, "When it all comes down to it Kid, you did exactly what any of us would have done, you went to help a bunch of clueless kids. No one, especially your Dad could ever fault you for that."

### *The first day back*

A tap on the passengers' window of her Mom's car had Allison jumping in her seat the first day she returned to school. Her hand instantly reaching for something to use as a weapon; a new habit she doubted she'd be dropping anytime soon. She relaxed slightly when she saw Jonathan standing beside the car awkwardly, his hand clenched tight around the strap of his black bag and an apologetic look on his face. Allison leaned over with a sigh, unlocking the door for the younger teen, and greeting him quietly when he settled in. Hands resting against her pale jeans, Allison's eyes refused to lift to the boy. She felt uncomfortable and out of place in the jeans, she'd

pulled from the back of her closet and a cropped navy jumper that ended where the jeans began. Her Mother had faked an attack when she saw her daughter in something other than those 'raggedy jeans you've worn to death' before the funeral. The mood had soured immediately. Understandable, considering her bloody clothes, favourite jeans included, currently sat in a garbage bag awaiting a proper burial or cremation in the garage.

"How you holdin' up?"

Jonathan's quiet voice makes Allison's shoulders tense again, pulling her from her thoughts. "Fine, I guess. My Mom is devastated. Thanks for coming to the funeral." Allison rests her forehead against the steering wheel in defeat. "Two weeks ago, we were fighting for our lives, I was like literally in a freaking explosion and now I just have to pretend like that didn't happen? Like everything is ace and we're all supposed to act like this," She wildly gestures to the students milling around her, laughing and preparing for the day. "Is important? How do I do that?"

Jonathan watches the older girl with a grimace, his hands twisting in his lap. "Honestly? We do the best we can. It's not an answer or a solution but I think it's all we have to offer." Jonathan pauses, sitting a little taller and hesitantly resting a hand on his friend's shoulder. "Do you remember when I said that no one normal ever accomplished anything? All these people around us, the ordinary people who have no idea the burden we carry? They have a chance to be something because of what we did."

Allison finally meets Jonathan's eyes, hers filled with unshed tears. "*No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of it to anyone else.*" She says quietly, the Charles Darwin quote was a favourite of her Father's and made more sense to her in the last few weeks than it ever had before.

"Yeah, something like that."

Allison rests a hand over her friends gently, a small smile gracing her features. "Thanks, Jonathan." He gives her shoulder one last squeeze before letting go with a half-smile of his own. "Hey," Allison calls when he pushes himself from the car, Nancy coming to stand beside

him. "I may be like totally black and blue right now but if you ever need me to help you carry your burdens, I'm always here. For both of you." She says with a grin, her eyes darting between the couple.

"Hey, that reminds me; how are you driving right now?" Jonathan raises an eyebrow at her crutches in the back seat.

"A gnarly cast isn't going to stop me, friend," Allison replied with a grin.

"No, I think that's Steve's job. See you round, Alli." Jonathan says with a rare smirk, closing the door with a small wave. Nancy nods her head toward the older girl, a cautious smile on her face. Allison returned it, they hadn't really spoken since the hospital, but she knew she didn't want to lose the younger teen as a friend. Nancy had mentioned she felt the same.

With some careful manoeuvring, Allison manages to grab her bag and crutches from the backseat, stepping out gingerly with a grunt of frustration. Slamming the door in frustration when a familiar blue car skidded into the parking spot next to her recklessly. Hoisting her bag on her right side she prepared to fight with the blond moron who had threatened Lucas and beaten Harrington to a pulp but was pleasantly surprised when Max launched from the car before he could, gentle as she wrapped her arms around the older girl's waist.

"I was going to come to see you this weekend, but my Mom wouldn't let me cause I had homework," The young red-head rolls her eyes in annoyance. "Are you feeling any better?" Allison remembered the last time her young friend had seen her was at her Father's funeral on Friday. She nodded reassuringly, leaning against the car and lifting her jumper slightly to show the white bandages that the doctor had loosely wrapped around her abdomen. Yellow and green discoloured her entire right side and crawled to her back, now that her movement wasn't so limited, she had been able to take a look in the mirror. It was pretty cool, she'd made Jonathan take photos.

"Could always be worse, Kid. A few more weeks and I'll be back to normal, I have to miss a few track-meets which sucks though, I was excited to make them all eat my dust. The doctor says I should have my cast off before Christmas." Max grins, tosses a glance behind her

to see her Step-brother watching the pair with a scowl.

"Scram."

Billy's scowl deepens as he slams his door and stomps away, adjusting his hair as he goes. Max turns back to Allison with a grin, whose eyes are still on her classmates retreating figure. "Stuck a syringe full of Will's medicine in his neck and threatened his balls with Steve's bat if he didn't leave me and my friends alone, tell me if he bothers you." A disbelieving chuckle bellows from Allison's mouth, causing her to grasp her side in pain.

"Okay no laughing." She winces, pushing her hand through her hair. "Good job kid." Max glows with praise and steps toward the middle school, spotting Lucas and the others waving her over.

Max waves back turning to Allison with a grin, "Bye, Alli!" Allison waves, watching her red hair flutter behind her as she runs over to the boys who all greet her with grins, even Mike, who nudges her shoulder with his own when they walk toward the middle school.

Daniel's sandy hair stood out amongst his group as he talked to Lucas and Dustin animatedly, Will listening on quietly a big smile lighting his young face before he turns away. It soothes Allison seeing them all carry on as before, able to just be carefree kids, she had said she would carry the burden for her friends, and that included those kids.

The bell rings behind Allison, jolting her from her thoughts. She crutches toward the high school at ease, trying to remember if she had any homework due today.

*Late November*

"You doing okay, girl? You're totally out of it today."

Allison tucked a flyaway strand of her dark hair behind her ear, meeting her friends concerned hazel gaze. "Yeah, I'm just... can you believe Thanksgiving is already here? I feel like it's still my first day here sometimes." Resting her hands against her crossed leg, The other stretched out before her, her formally white cast now covered in colourful writing and drawings; her favourite was the little *gremlin*

right on her ankle that Daniel had spent his afternoon drawing on the weekend after their Dad's funeral. Allison's gaze found the dense forest that surrounded them and the running track. It was still early; the pink and orange of the sunrise filled the ominous wood with warmth. It felt safe, she always liked this time of day. "I don't mean to be a downer," She continues with a rueful smile, eyes darting to her lap. "I guess it just hit me today that this would be the first holiday without my Dad, Thanksgiving was his favourite, He loved the parade."

Melinda's tan hand slipped into Allison's, squeezing lightly. "I'm so sorry, babe. Are you guys going to watch together?" she asks, her grip firm on her friend's hand. Allison shrugs, her eyes never leaving their entwined fingers in her lap.

"Daniel and I are, I haven't really spoken to my Mom, she doesn't leave her room much anymore." Mary Edwards hadn't spoken to either of her children since the funeral, Allison couldn't deny it hurt not hearing her Mother's carefree laugh or the high-pitched way she lamented their names when they were doing the wrong thing or just being smart. She had pushed all her worry about what her Mother knew about the lab away before she had left the hospital. She voted in favour of being a support for her, but it had been Mary that pulled away after that. Daniel and Allison understood and worked as a team to make life in the house more bearable. They both sat by her room when they came home from school and told her about their day.

"My Mom always says it's important to be with family on Thanksgiving because they are who you should be most thankful for. A family is a blessing, no matter what form it takes, we're family, Alli. If you and Daniel want to come over and attempt to deal with the chaos that is eighteen people in one house, you are more than welcome."

Allison squeezed the blonde's hand one last time before pulling away, a grateful smile on her face. "Thank you for the offer, Mel, and thank you for being here for me these last few weeks." Melinda became someone she could trust implicitly, she was a reprieve from the Upside Down and the rest of her friends who knew her burdens. The blonde reached out during her time in the hospital, it had been unexpected. They spent a lot of their time together on the track;

Allison doing gentle stretches and cheering Melinda on as she ran. Sometimes Steve joined them. They laughed about Carol and Billy and all the stupid popular kids. The blonde had quickly become one of her closest friends, they had much more in common than both had previously assumed, a love of lemonade, running, making fun of Harrington, and Fleetwood Mac had started their friendship and aspirations to attend college in Boston cemented it.

She still escaped to the dark room with Jonathan sometimes, when it all got too much. Especially in the days before Thanksgiving. Sometimes he would talk with her about books or about Will, other days they would sit in silence. Allison deep in thought while Jonathan tended to his photos. He understood her, he was a level voice in her head and she appreciated it.

"Hey, we've got each-others backs right?" Melinda asks with a grin, rising from the red track with a stretch, her thin top riding up slightly. Rubbing her bare leg with a groan, Allison joined her, when Melinda helped her up. It was growing steadily colder as the snow months approached but both girls still preferred to run (Or in Allison's case, lightly stretch) in the summer uniform. "We better head in, the bells gonna ring soon and if I'm late for English one more time Mrs Simmons is gonna have my head and my captaincy." Melinda walks over to the dewy grass where Allison had thrown her crutches and grabs them for her, passing them over with a concerned furrow of her brow. "Are you gonna be okay?"

Allison nods with a small smile, the pair walk to the gym in silence, opening the door to the warmth inside with a thankful groan, "I think it's time for pants." Melinda laments, looking at her blue-tinged legs. Allison laughs in agreement, Patting her friend's chilly arm lightly. "At least you have like half of one leg covered," She pouted.

"Td rather freeze, to be honest," Allison jokes looking at her cast. They both wave to the coach as they stumbled toward the blue locker room doors, grinning at the red faces of the basketball team in the middle of suicides.

"You ladies wanna come show these idiots how to sprint? We seem to have different ideas on what speed is." The coach shouts across the court over the pounding and squeaking of runners on the linoleum.

Melinda laughs at the grumbles coming from the court as some of the boys pick up speed.

"I taught you better than that, Harrington. I could beat you on crutches!" Allison calls earning a finger and a growled 'go to hell, Edwards' from her sweaty friend. The girls duck into the locker room chuckling and emerge clean and ready for the day just as the morning bell sounds. The boys are all changed and leaving as well and Allison spots Steve ahead of her, bidding goodbye to Melinda who jogs to make it to class in time, she nudges Steve on her way through who slows for his crippled friend. "A morning practice the day before Thanksgiving, what's grinding coach's gears?" she greets, snorting when he glowers down at her.

"Good morning, Steve' is usually how a conversation begins in the morning, Edwards." He grumbles in response, running his fingers through his damp hair. He glanced at her quickly taking in her good spirits with a roll of his dark eyes. Wind sprints were torture, and his friend's cheery attitude wasn't helping him.

"So, A Priest, a Rabbi, and a Stripper walk into a bar..." Allison starts with a straight face, earning a snort from Steve.

"I've heard that one. Weird salutation but okay." Steve lets a small grin play on his mouth despite trying to hold onto his grumpy countenance.

"Salutation? That's a big word Harrington, perhaps you should save some of that for class."

"Some of what?"

"Your brain, I don't know if you know this, but people think you're stupid," Allison whispered conspiratorially.

Steve shakes his head with a small smirk, pushing open the door for them and letting her through. "I don't think I've cared about what people think of me for a long time."

"Good morning, Steve," Allison sang happily, pleased to see the yellow of his bruises had nearly faded completely, the artificial lights



of the corridor giving him only a slightly pallid look in comparison to last week. She was glad his last piece of physical proof Halloween weekend had ever happened was nearly gone.

"Good morning, Edwards."

The pair were silent for a moment as they make their way to chemistry, Steve fending off teens who nearly walked into Allison or got in the way of her crutches. She rolled her eyes at the furrow of his brow while he concentrated. It had become apparent quickly that Steve was the mother of the group when he had come to look after Daniel the week Allison got out of the hospital. Her Mom was busy making funeral arrangements and had hired Steve to babysit. He refused to let Allison do anything for herself, going as far as to try carrying her places. It had been a nightmare that Allison had gotten through with heavy medication and jokes about buying Steve a candy stripper outfit.

"You know, sometimes it's like totally okay to be more Bugs than Sam." Allison spouted randomly earning Steve's eyebrow rising in annoyance, "I'm just saying Harrington, your gnarly attitude is a drain on my positivity man."

The corner of Steve's mouth kicked up as he opened the door to the chem room. The first time coming back into her chemistry room had been surreal. It turned out Bunsen burners were a trigger for her. Her teacher had seen the distress in her eyes and began a long-winded and panicked speech about her readiness to return to school that had oddly calmed her down. School was nothing in comparison to what she had faced, so she crutched to her seat, sat in her assigned stool, and dutifully took notes.

"Hey, how does that joke end?" Steve asks as they take their seats.

"They all get eaten by sharks and no one dared boo at *Eurovision* ever again."

Steve frowned, pulling his books from his bag, "I thought they were in a bar?"

"That's your problem with the ending of that joke?" Allison raises her

eyebrow disbelievingly.

"Why not." Steve shrugs, attempting to keep a straight face.

"Well, the bar is in Australia." The brunette replies taking down the morning notes.

"Ah, Sure."

By the end of the day, Allison was more than happy to be heading home for a break. She had said goodbye to all her friends, wishing them a happy Thanksgiving. Nancy had given her a hug and Jonathan had given her a picture he had processed of her and Daniel hugging from a few weeks previous. They had all gone out for a picnic to get Allison out of the house and Jonathan had snapped a few happy photos. Allison had hugged the awkward boy tightly much to his amusement and wished him a good holiday.

Allison glanced up from watching where her crutches landed to cross the road noticing Daniel leaned against the door of the car, watching her crutch toward him. "It makes me nervous getting in a car with you when you have that thing on you." He says as she nears, gesturing toward her pretty cast.

"I mean, you can always walk home."

"How strange, my nerves are completely gone."

"That's what I thought wastoid."

Allison slides into the car, tossing her crutches into the back seat with both their bags. "Steve found out I drove today, so you don't have to worry, after Thanksgiving he'll be picking us up again. He told me he can't believe he was stupid enough to believe me when I lied and said I would get us a lift with Nancy and Jonathan."

Daniel smirked, clicking his seat belt into place. "I still don't know how you made him believe that."

"I'm a pathological liar, he just doesn't know that yet."

"I was thinking we could go to the cinema tonight? *16 candles* is still

showing." Daniel suggested, grinning at his sister's disbelieving look. Allison had been trying to drag Daniel to see that movie for weeks and he wouldn't have a bar of it.

"What are you planning?"

Daniel shrugged, waving to his friends as they drove past the biking group. "Nothing planned. I just want to get out of the house and the last few movies we've seen were my choices. Also, Steve asked if you wanted to hang out tonight and it would totally bring me the most joy to watch him have to sit through that movie.

Allison cackled at her brother who joined in, a big grin on his cherub face. "You are like totally evil, dweeb. I love it."

"You like me, you really like me." He quotes emotionlessly earning another round of laughter from Allison.

"Stop! I can't laugh, it hurts," The girl wheezed, clutching her side lightly. The tension of the past few days melting away as they fall into their usual bantering rhythm. "Oh my God, can you imagine his face?" Allison continued, trying to focus her breathing to stop the pain in her ribs. Daniel grinned switching on the radio much to Allison's relief.

They had pulled up at the house, both hopping out still singing along to *Wham!* "I reckon we've made it home in time to watch cartoons, it would be pretty ace if we didn't miss *Superfriends*."

Daniel snorted, opening the front door and dropping his bag in the corner. "We aren't watching that. *Transformers* is so much better.

"Not even!"

"Even." Daniel plunked onto the couch, "Alli, sometimes I wonder what went wrong with you."

"Because I think *Superfriends*, a show about the *Justice League* is better than *Transformers* there has to be something wrong with me! I think you just aren't mature enough to understand the entertainment value my cartoon holds" Allison finishes primly. Remembering a similar conversation, they had had in a pink diner weeks ago. Allison set

herself down next to Daniel settling in for a few hours before Steve came around. Grabbing the remote, she switches the television on. "I'm older than you, so that means that my choice like outdoes your choice." Daniel just raises his pale eyebrows, watching his sister with a shameless expression.

"I'm a very charismatic child, Allison."

"You're something." Allison grunts, roughly placing the remote into his open palm.

## **17. One-shot Alert!**

**Hiya All!**

**The first One-Shot for this story is up! You can find it through my page. It's called I am the Sand, You are the Sea.**

**I really hope you enjoy the first entry, it's called snow. Please favourite and follow the one-shots for updates coming every second Sunday.**

**Thank you for all the amazing reviews, It makes me so happy to know you enjoy Alli as much as I do.**

**XO**

**Nikki**